

Practical Concentration

CONCENTRATION

A PRACTICAL COURSE

ERNEST WOOD

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CONCENTRATION :

A PRACTICAL COURSE

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BY

ERNEST WOOD

*Late Head of the Sind National College,
Hyderabad, Sind, India*

Eighth Edition

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FOREWORD

MR. ERNEST WOOD is well known as both a writer and a lecturer on religious and educational matters, and his work is always careful and thoughtful. A practical course on Concentration is a subject for which he is well equipped, and this little work should prove very useful to the serious student. It is admirably planned, and effectively carried out, and—a most important fact in such a treatise—there is nothing in it which, when practised, can do the striver after concentration the least physical, mental or moral harm. I can therefore heartily recommend it to all who desire to obtain control of the mind.

ANNIE BESANT

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PREFACE

IT is nearly seventeen years since I wrote this book. Since then it has been through many editions in a great number of languages—so many that I have lost track of them—and must have had a total circulation of somewhere about a quarter of a million, and it is in daily and increasing demand in many countries. In view of this public appreciation of the work I decided recently to rewrite it, as I saw much room for improvement in the manner of exposition of the subject, though there was little to add in the way of teaching, and nothing at all to alter in the philosophy and theory which it contained.

In the preface to the first edition I explained that the book was the fruit of some fifteen years' experience. Since then that experience has been greatly extended, much inner and outer knowledge has been gained, and I have had the honor of close association with great experts in this line of thought and practice. As a result I have nothing to eliminate from the original instruction, but only increased knowledge of the truths which it embodies.

Nothing but good can result from following the directions given here, for from the whole course I have carefully eliminated all the elements of danger which

are so largely present in the eastern books on Yoga. Those books were studied along with a competent teacher, whereas this is for private use; hence the necessity for care.

The book is intended as a practical manual, and the student who takes it seriously as such will derive most benefit from it if he treats it as a six months' course rather than as a reading book. At the end of the course the earnest student will find that he knows exactly what to do next. All the same, others who wish to treat it only as a general help to their meditations will find benefit from reading it through, and picking out for their use whatever appeals especially to themselves.

Many hard-headed people may think that my convictions as to the possibilities which we may attain in the near or remote future by internal self-culture are excessively extravagant; but I can assure them that they are perfectly in accordance with universal and inviolable law, and with the statements of such exponents as Patanjali, and are consistent with the actual experience and attainment of a number of experts whom I have had the honor to meet and know.

SYDNEY

E. W.

September, 1925

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CHAPTER I

SUCCESS IN LIFE

THE UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITY

Do you desire success in life? Will you take the means that infallibly secure it? Will you choose, and say to yourself: "I will have wealth; I will have fame; I will have virtue; I will have power"? Let your imagination play upon the thought, and watch the dim clouds of hope shape themselves into heavenly possibilities. Give wings to your fancy, for fairer than any picture that you can paint with thought is the future that you can claim with will. Once you have imagined, once you have chosen, say: "I will." And there is nothing on earth that can hinder you for long; for you are immortal and the future is obedient to you.

You say that death may stand in your way? It will not. You say that poverty and sickness and friends may stand in your way? They certainly will not. Nothing can, unless you permit it, or even make it so. But you must choose, and never again must you wish for anything. But you must say: "I will." And you must say it always in thought and in deed, not only now in word. And henceforth never for a moment

must your purpose change, but your constant intention must turn everything you touch into line with it. Then, if that which you have chosen is not harmful, it will be yours before long.

You speak of the littleness of man, lost in the wrinkles of giant mother earth, herself as a speck of dust in the infinitudes of space! It is not so, for the great things are not measured by size. You talk of weakness and fatigue, of the immediate follies and pleasures and proprieties and accidents of life—how these confine and limit little man. It is not so, for all can be turned to use. The body is only a garment and the senses but peep-holes in the veil of flesh, and when these are quiet and that is obedient, and the mind dwells in contemplation of your immortal possibilities, a window opens within you, and through it you see and know that you shall be what you will to be, and nothing else.

As the tiny seed, buried in the ground, bursts and puts forth a tender shoot, which pushes its way through the soil and wins its freedom in the upper air, and presently there is a mighty oak, peopling the earth with portions of itself, or, as a great banyan spreads without limit from a little root, providing wealth and home for myriads of creatures; so put ye forth this day the first tender but not uncertain shoot of will, and choose what you will be.

What will you choose? Will you have power? Then let others be freer and more powerful because you are so. Will you have knowledge? Then let others be wiser because you are so. Will you have love? Then

let others enjoy it because you have much to give. Thus will your will be in accord with the Great Will and the Great Law, and your life be one with the Great Life, without which there can be no permanent success.

What will be your means? Everything that you meet, small and great; for there is nothing that you cannot use as a means to your end. But once more, let all the persons and the things that you use be benefited by the use. Thus your success will be theirs also, and the Great Law will be fulfilled.

SUCCESS AND CONCENTRATION

But, whatever you choose, one thing you will need in all things and at all times—concentration of purpose, of thought, of feeling, of action; so that this, like a powerful magnet, will polarise everything with which you deal. In all the aims of life it is needed for success. The men who have succeeded in business, social and political life, in art, science and philosophy, in power and virtue, have all been marked out by an unswerving fixity of purpose and control of mind, though often they have unwisely neglected the Great Law. Has it not happened always, is it not happening now, and will it not happen in the future, that so far as human progress is in human hands it is achieved by systematic and persistent activity, control of desires and concentration of mind, and without these it is not achieved?

Read the lives and philosophy of every type of purposeful men, and you will find this fact recorded in

them. The Epicurean of old concentrated his mind upon the present and tried to live in accord with natural laws. He did not allow his mind to dwell with regret upon anything past, nor to have fears or anxieties for the future. The Stoic fixed his attention upon the things which lay in his control, refusing to be disturbed by anything that lay outside his power and purpose, or to waste thought and feeling upon it. The Platonist strove to fix his mind, with reverent inquiry, upon the mysteries of life. Patanjali, the great master of Indian Yoga, declared that man could come to his own true state only by the successful practice of complete control of mind. The religious devotee strives, by filling his life and surroundings with ceremonies and symbols, and by constantly repeating in thought the names of God, to stimulate his mind to ever stronger and stronger devotional feelings. The successful man of knowledge is so intent upon his purpose that he finds instruction in the most trifling things that he meets. Such is the power of mind that with its aid all things can be bent to our purpose, and such is the power of man that he can bend the mind to his will.

Do we not find that indecision, trepidation, anxiety and worry give rise to bodily ills, weakness, indigestion and sleeplessness? Even in these small matters regular practice of control of mind, in a simple form, acts like a magic cure. It is the best means of escape from envy, jealousy, resentment, discontent, delusion, self-deception, pride, anger and fear. Without it, the building of character cannot be carried on, and with it it cannot fail. Any study is successful in proportion to

the mental concentration brought to bear upon it; and the practice largely increases the reproductive powers of memory.

THE HIGHER ACHIEVEMENTS

One of the higher efforts and achievements of concentration of mind has been well described by Dr. Annie Besant in her book *The Ancient Wisdom*, in the following words :

“The student must begin by practising extreme temperance in all things, cultivating an equable and serene state of mind ; his life must be clean and his thoughts pure, his body held in strict subjection to the soul, and his mind trained to occupy itself with noble and lofty themes ; he must habitually practise compassion, sympathy, helpfulness to others, with indifference to troubles and pleasures affecting himself, and he must cultivate courage, steadfastness and devotion. Having, by persevering practice, learned to control his mind to some extent, so that he is able to keep it fixed on one line of thought for some little time, he must begin its more rigid training by a daily practice of concentration on some difficult or abstract subject, or on some lofty object of devotion. This concentration means the firm fixing of the mind on one single point, without wandering, and without yielding to any distractions caused by external objects, by the activity of the senses, or by that of the mind itself. It must be braced up to an unswerving steadiness and fixity, until gradually it will learn so to withdraw its attention from the outer world and from the body that the senses will remain quiet and still, while the mind is intensely alive with all its energies drawn inwards to be launched at a single point of thought, the highest to which it can attain. When it is able to hold itself thus with comparative ease, it is ready for a further

step, and by a strong but calm effort of the will it can throw itself beyond the highest thought it can reach while working in the physical brain, and in that effort will rise to and unite itself with the higher consciousness and find itself free of the body."

Of that higher life beyond the brain you may read details in her valuable Theosophical books; how it opens up before man endless vistas of knowledge and power, altogether beyond anything imaginable in the cramping limitations of the brain. But if you pursue the spiritual life by more devotional methods, there again you will find the same necessity for concentration of purpose. An ancient Scripture says that the devotee should see God in everything and everything in God. Whatever action you perform, of eating, of sacrificing, of giving, of striving—do that as an offering unto Him. A man can do this only when he has acquired concentration. Again, for those who knock at the portal of the holy Path, we find it written in a recent famous book, *At the Feet of the Master*, that the aspirant must achieve one-pointedness and control of mind.

In yet another way has concentration of mind been used. The literature of religion is full of instances of remarkably extended vision of unseen things attained by the rapt mind. Indian yogīs and fakīrs enumerate eight sets of faculties and powers, including vision of the absent, the past and the future, psychic telescoping and microscopy, the power of travelling invisibly in the subtle body, and others—all attainable by concentration. Marvellous as these effects are and fascinating as are the study and the practice which

lead to them, not less interesting and effectual is the application of concentration to the workings of our normal senses, and in the extension of our power and knowledge in the familiar world of everyday life.

What, then, does this concentration mean, and what practices should we follow to gain control of mind? It does not mean a narrowing, limiting, confining of our thoughts and activities. It does not mean retiring to the forest or the cave. It does not mean a loss of human sympathies and interests. It does not mean that the wine of life has run dry in our veins, like a desert river in the summer drought. It does mean that the whole of our life is inspired with one purpose. It does mean increased thought, increased activity, widened sympathies: for we are ever on the look-out to use all things for the one great aim.

CHAPTER II

THE MAGIC BOX

THE MIND'S FIRST POWER

IMAGINE yourself to be standing with a party of friends in some oriental market-place, or in a palace garden. Enter, a conjurer with a magic box. The strange man spreads a square of cloth upon the ground ; then places reverently upon it a colored box of basket-work perhaps eight inches square. He gazes at it steadily, mutters a little, removes the lid, and takes out of it one by one, with exquisite care, nine more boxes, which seem to be of the same size as the original one, but are of different colors. You think that the trick is now finished. But no ; he opens one of the new boxes and takes out nine more ; he opens the other eight and takes nine more out of each—all with oriental deliberation. And still he has not done ; he begins to open up what we may call the third generation of boxes, until before long the ground is covered with piles of them as far as he can reach. The nine boxes of the first generation and the eighty-one boxes of the second generation have disappeared from sight beneath the heaps, before you begin to think

that this conjurer is perhaps prepared to go on for ever—and then you call a halt, and open your purse right royally.

Your higher self is the spectator; you are the conjurer; your mind is the spread cloth; every idea that you have is a magic box; and great will be the reward from above for him who makes himself a good conjurer, who sets himself to produce many and beautiful boxes.

Sit down in some quiet place by yourself, and set before the mind an idea of some common object. Watch it carefully and you will soon find that it contains many other ideas, which can be taken out and made to stand around it—or perhaps you will find that they leap out incontinently and begin to play about.

Let us suppose that I think of a silver coin. What do I find on looking into this box? I see an Indian rupee, a British half-crown, an American fifty-cent piece. I see coins round and square, fluted and filleted, small and large, thick and thin. I see a silver mine in Bolivia, and a shop in Shanghai where I changed some Mexican dollars. I see the American eagle and the motto *E pluribus unum*; I see the image of King George. I see the mint in Bombay; the strips of metal going through the machines; the discs punched out, the holes remaining.

Enough, we must call a halt, lest this fascinating conjurer go on for ever. That he cannot do, however; but if you permit him he will open many thousands of boxes before he exhausts his powers. He will soon

come to the end of the possibilities of the first box, but then he can open the others which he has taken from it.

It is given to some minds, of the wandering and unsteady kind, to open another box before they have taken everything out of the first. That is not concentration. Concentration on an idea means that you will completely empty that box before you turn away from it to open another. The value of such practice is that it brightens up the mind and makes it bring forth ideas on the chosen subject quickly and in abundance.

THE ROADS OF THOUGHT

There is a reason why a given box should become exhausted. It is that the ideas which come out of it do not do so at random but according to definite laws; they are chained to it, as it were, and only certain kinds can come out of a certain kind of box. Suppose, for example, someone mentions the word "elephant" in your hearing. Many ideas may rise out of it in your mind. You may think of particular parts of the animal, such as its large ear or its peculiar trunk. You may think of its intelligence and its philosophical temperament, or of particular elephants that you have seen or read about. You may think of similar animals, such as the hippopotamus or the rhinoceros, or of the countries from which elephants come. But there are certain things you are not likely to think of, such as a humming-bird or a tall hat, a paper-knife or a motor-boat. There are certain definite laws which hold ideas

together in the mind, just as gravitation, magnetism, cohesion and similar laws hold together material objects in the physical world.

For the purpose of our present practice I will give here a list of the four main laws of thought. Notice, first that among your thoughts about an elephant there will be images of things that resemble it very closely, that is, of other animals, such as a cow, a horse, a whale and a camel. The first law of ideal attraction is to be seen in this. Ideas of similar things cling closely together, and easily suggest one another. We will call this first law that of *Object and Class and Objects of the Same Class*.

The second law connects *Whole and Part*, so that when you think of an elephant you will probably form special mental pictures of its trunk or ears or feet.

The third law expresses the relation between *Object and Quality*. Thus one thinks of the elephant as a philosopher, of the dog as a devotee, and of the cat as an artist.

The fourth law involves no such observation of the resemblances and differences of things, or an object and the class to which it belongs, or a whole and its parts, or an object and its prominent qualities. It is concerned with striking and familiar experiences of our own, and has more to do with imagination than logical observation. If I have seen or thought of two things strongly or frequently together, the force of their joint impact on my consciousness will tend to give them permanent association in my mind. I will

therefore entitle the fourth law *Familiar Experience*. Thus, for example, if I think of a pen I shall probably think also of an inkpot, not of a pot of vaseline. If I think of a bed I shall think of sleep, not of dancing. If I think of Brazil I shall think of coffee and the marvellous river Amazon, not of rice and the Himālaya mountains. Each one of us has an independent fund of experience made up of memories of such relationships seen or heard of or thought about either vividly or repeatedly.

The four roads of thought mentioned above are given in a general way for our present purpose. To be completely stated the laws must be given as nine, and I have done it fully in my book on *Memory Training*. Those who want to study this matter more closely will find there explanations of such relations as *Contrast* (which comes under our first law, as involving resemblance and comparison) and *Cause and Effect* (which comes under our fourth law, as being familiar sequence or contiguity in time).

MINDS, QUICK AND SLOW

We have now come to the point when the first exercise in concentration may be begun. We must consider what it is and what it proposes to do, and the latter first.

Although all minds work under the same laws, they do so in different degrees of power and plenty. Some work quickly, others slowly; some have much to offer, others little. Suppose you are going to sit

down and write an essay on cats; you may find thoughts coming plentifully forward from the recesses of your mind, or you may sit chewing the end of your pen for a long time before they begin to appear. You may bring forth a finished production or something in the nature of the following, which was reported of a small boy at school in England :

“A cat is a quadruped, the legs being at the four corners, as usual. We don't tease cats, because, firstly, it's wrong, and secondly, cats have claws which are longer than people think. Cats have nine lives, but they are not needed in this country, because of Christianity.”

Consider the difference between the mind of a poet and that of an average laborer in this respect. The former finds everything full of suggestion. I remember an example of a friend of my own, who is one of the leading Irish poets. One day he was riding a bicycle down a lane in Ireland when he saw a boy sitting on a fence, blowing soap bubbles with a clay pipe and a bowl of suds. This would have suggested nothing much to a common mind, but that of my friend soon began to work and bring forth its treasures, and by the time he had reached home he was ready to write down quite a long poem on the subject of bubbles. He wrote not only of the boy on the fence, but also of the bubbles which we are all making in our imagination all the time, and even of the bubbles that God is blowing in space, the great worlds which may seem as evanescent to Him as did the soap bubbles to the little boy in the country lane.

Some minds are brighter than others, and you want yours to be bright and strong. You want to think of many ideas, and to think them well. You want to think all round any subject of your consideration, not only on one side of it, as prejudiced or timid thinkers do. While you are making the mind bright, however, care must be taken to avoid the danger that besets brilliant minds everywhere. The quick thinker who is about to write upon some social subject, such as that of prison reform or education, will find thoughts rapidly rising in his mind, and very often he will be carried away by some of the first that come, and he will follow them up and write brilliantly along the lines of thought to which they lead ; but probably he will miss something of great importance to the understanding of the matter, because he has left the central subject of thought before he has considered it from every point of view. Just so a chess player, captivated by some daring and brilliant plan of his own, will sometimes forget to look to his defences, and will find himself the subject of sudden disaster. Sometimes a duller mind, or at any rate a slower one, will be more balanced, and will at last come nearer to the truth. So, while you do want a quick mind, not one that is hard to warm up like a cheap motor-car engine on a cold winter's morning, you do not want one that will start with a leap and run away with you, but one that will dwell long enough on a chosen subject to see it from every point of view, before it begins the varied explorations of thought that it should make upon many different lines.

THE PRACTICE OF RECALL

We may now turn to the first exercise.

Exercise 1. First week. Select a suitable place, where you can be undisturbed for fifteen minutes; sit down quietly, and turn your mind to an agreeable thought. Place a watch with a seconds' hand before you and notice the time exactly. Then close the eyes, think of the object, and endeavor not to forget it. After a little time you will find that you are thinking about something else. Then enter in columnar form in a notebook: (1) what you were concentrating upon, (2) the period of time, and (3) what you found yourself thinking of. The process may be repeated several times, but if the head aches it should be stopped for the time being. A simple and comparatively uninteresting object, such as a coin, a watch, a pen, a leaf, or a simple flower, should be selected for this preliminary experiment, and one should change the object from time to time.

At the end of the week study your notebook and you will find that your concentration has always terminated for one of the following reasons: impatience, anxiety about something, dullness, bodily restlessness, pain in the head, a catch in the breath, outside interruption. You have found that the mind is restless, and that it responds too readily to every slight disturbance from the outside world and from the body, so that it leaves the subject of concentration and gives attention to something else.

That brings us to the second exercise, which should form a habit of recall in the mind, so that its tendency

will be not to leave the chosen object, but to return to it when it is for a moment diverted. It is usual for the student who wants to gain concentration so as to keep his attention on one thing for some little time, to sit down and fix it firmly there with a determined will, and bring it back to the point whenever it wanders away. That is not the best way to attain concentration. The proper way to do it is to decide upon the thing upon which your attention is to be fixed, and then think about everything else you can without actually losing sight of it.

Exercise 2. Second, third and fourth weeks. Before you sit down to commence the practice of recall decide quite definitely what will be your object of concentration, and for how long you will sustain it. Sometimes people sit down and then begin to decide what to do; they start upon one object and then change to another because they find it unsatisfactory, and at last they wake up to realise that their time is gone and they have done nothing. It is better to determine before you sit down exactly what you will do, and then say to yourself: "I am going to fix my mind upon such and such a thing for a quarter of an hour, and I have no concern with anything else in the world during this time." It is important that you should realise clearly in imagination what you are about to do, and picture yourself as doing it before you begin.

Practise the following exercise every day for three weeks before you take any further steps. It does not matter what object you select, though it is best to avoid anything large or complex at first. Real objects

may be thought of, or pictures, or symbols, and the object should be changed every two or three days. Let us take an example of this exercise. Suppose you decide to concentrate upon a cow. You must think of everything else that you can without losing sight of the cow. That is, you must think of everything that you can that is connected with the idea of a cow by any of the four lines of thought which have been already explained.

So, close your eyes and imagine a cow, and say: "Law one—Object and Class, and other Objects of the same Class," and think: "A cow is an animal, a quadruped, a mammal"—there may be other classes as well—"and other members of its classes are sheep, horse, dog, cat,—" and so on, until you have brought out *all* the thought you can from within your own mind in this connection. Do not be satisfied until you have brought out every possible thought.

We know things by comparing them with others, by noting, however briefly, their resemblances and differences. When we define a thing we mention its class, and then the characters in which it differs from other members of the same class. Thus a chair is a table with a difference, and a table is a chair with a difference; both are articles of furniture; both are supports. The more things we compare a given object with in this way the better we know it; so, when you have worked through this exercise with the first law and looked at all the other creatures for a moment each without losing sight of the cow, you have made brief comparisons which have improved your

observation of the cow. You will then know what a cow is as you never did before.

Then go on to the second road of thought—that of Whole and Part, and think distinctly of the parts of the cow—its eyes, nose, ears, knees, hoofs, and the rest, and its inner parts as well if you are at all acquainted with animal anatomy and physiology.

Thirdly comes the law relating to Objects and their Qualities. You think of the physical qualities of the cow—its size, weight, color, form, motion, habits—and also of its mental and emotional qualities, as far as those can be discerned.

Lastly comes the fourth division, that of Familiar Experience, in which you will review “Cows I have known,” particular experiences you have had with cows which may have impressed themselves on your imagination. In this class also will come things commonly connected with cows, such as milk, butter, cheese, farms, meadows, and even knife handles made of horn and bone, and shoes made of leather.

Then you will have brought forth every thought of which you are capable which is directly connected in your own mind with the idea of a cow. And this should not have been done in any careless or desultory fashion; you should be able to feel at the end of the exercise that you have thoroughly searched for every possible idea on each line, while all the time the cow stood there and attention was not taken away from it. A hundred times the mind will have been tempted to follow up some interesting thought with reference to the ideas which you have been bringing out, but every

time it has been turned back to the central object, the cow.

If this practice is thoroughly carried out it thus produces a *habit of recall* which replaces the old habit of wandering, so that it becomes the inclination of the mind to return to the central thought, and you acquire the power to keep your attention upon one thing for a long time.

A simile which may assist us to picture this practice of recall is that of a railway journey through a rich plain with a mountain looming in the near distance. Sitting in the train we may notice the various objects that are flitting past; near at hand the fences, bushes, trees and wayside houses; beyond them village, field, river, forest and lake; yet all the time we are aware of the mountain standing as a pivot round which all these things seem to turn. This preliminary practice of concentration should resemble such a journey, the intervening country being inspected, but the central object of concentration towering above all.

You will soon find that this practice has given you not only power of concentration, but that it has brought benefit to the mind in a variety of ways. You will have trained it to some extent in correct and consecutive thinking, and in observation, and you will have organised some of that accumulation of knowledge which perhaps you have for years been pitching pell-mell into the mind, as most people do. This exercise, carried on for three weeks, exactly according to instructions, will make the mind far brighter than it was before, and give it strength and quality evident

not only at the time of exercise, but at all times, whatever may be the business of thought on which you are engaged during the day.

OBSERVATION

One of its most fruitful results will be found in the development of keen observation. Most people's ideas about anything are exceedingly imperfect. In their mental pictures of things some points are clear, others are vague, and others lacking altogether, to such an extent that sometimes a fragment of a thing stands in the mind as a kind of symbol for the whole. A gentleman was once asked about a lady whom he had known very well for many years. The question was as to whether her hair was fair or dark, and he could not say. In thinking of her his mind had pictured certain parts only, or certain parts vaguely and others clearly. Perhaps he knew the shape of her nose, her general build and the carriage of her body; but his picture certainly had no color in the hair.

The same truth may be brought out by the familiar question about the figures on the dial of your friend's watch, or about the shape and color of its hands. I tested a friend with this question one day: "Can you tell me whether the numerals on your watch are the old-fashioned Roman ones which are so much used, or the common or Arabic numerals which have come into vogue more recently?"

"Why!" he replied, without hesitation. "They are the Roman numerals, of course." Then he took out

His watch, not to confirm his statement, but just in an automatic sort of way, as people do when thinking of such a thing, and as he glanced at it a look of astonishment spread over his face. "By Jove," he exclaimed, "they are the Arabic figures. And do you know, I have been using this watch for seven years, and I have never noticed that before!" He thought he knew his watch, but he was thinking of a part of it, and the part was standing in his mind for the whole.

Then I put another question to him: "I suppose you know how to walk and how to run?" "Yes," said he, "I certainly do." "And you can imagine yourself doing those things?" "Yes." "Well, then," said I, "please tell me what is the difference between running and walking." He puzzled over this question for a long time, for he saw that it was not merely a difference of speed. He walked up and down the room, and then ran round it, observing himself closely. At last he sat down laughing, and said: "I have it. When you walk you always have at least one foot on the ground, but when you run both feet are in the air at the same time. And the feet do not both touch the ground at the same time, for that would be jumping." His answer was right, but he had never known it before.

CHAPTER III

AIDS TO CONCENTRATION

ATTENTION WITHOUT TENSION

MANY people fail in concentration because they make the mistake of trying to *grasp* the mental image firmly. Do not do that. Place the chosen idea before your attention and look at it calmly, as you would look at your watch to see the time. Such gentle looking reveals the details of a thing quite as well as any intense effort could possibly do—perhaps even better. Try it now, for five minutes, for when once you have realised how to look a thing over and see it completely, in whole and in part, without staring, peering, frowning, holding the breath, clenching the fists, or any such thing, you can apply your power to the mental practice of concentration. Pick up any common object—a watch, a pen, a book, a leaf, a fruit and look at it calmly for five minutes. Observe every detail that you can about it, as to the color, weight, size, texture, form, composition, construction, ornamentation and the rest, without any tension whatever. Attention without tension is what you want. After you have felt how to do this, you will understand how

concentration can be carried on in perfect quietude and silence. Suppose you wanted to hold out a small object at arm's length for as long a time as possible; you must hold it with a minimum of energy, letting it rest in the hand, not gripping it tightly. Do not imagine that the idea that you have chosen for your concentration has some life and will of its own, and that it wants to jump about or to run away from you. It is not the object that is fickle, but the mind. Trust the object to remain where you have put it, before the mind's eye, and keep your attention poised upon it. No grasping is necessary; indeed that tends to destroy the concentration.

People usually employ their mental energy only in the service of the physical body, and in thinking in connection with it. They find that the mental flow is unobstructed and that thinking is easy when there is a physical object to hold the attention, as, for example, in reading a book: Argumentation is easy when each step is fixed in writing, or the thought is stimulated by conversation. Similarly a game of chess is easy to play when we see the board; but to play it blindfold is a more difficult matter. The habit of thinking only in association with bodily activity and stimulus is generally so great that a special effort of thought is usually accompanied by wrinkling of the brows, tightening of the lips, and various muscular, nervous and functional disorders. The dyspepsia of scientific men and philosophers is almost proverbial. A child when learning anything displays the most astonishing contortions. When trying to write it often follows

the movements of its hand with its tongue, grasps its pencil very tightly, twists its feet round the legs of its chair, and makes itself tired in a very short time.

All such things must be stopped in the practice of concentration. A high degree of mental effort is positively injurious to the body unless this stoppage is at least partially accomplished. Muscular and nervous tension have nothing to do with concentration, and success in the exercise is not to be measured by any bodily sensation or feeling whatever. Some people think that they are concentrating when they feel a tightness between and behind the eyebrows; but they are only producing headaches and other troubles for themselves by encouraging the feeling. It is almost a proverb in the East that the sage or great thinker has a smooth brow. To screw the face out of shape, and cover the forehead with lines, is usually a sign that the man is trying to think beyond his strength, or when he is not accustomed to it. It is, however, in the insane asylums that you may see the furrowed brow at its best; not among men who know how to think. Concentration must be practised always without the slightest strain. Control of mind is not brought about by fervid effort of any kind, any more than a handful of water can be held by a violent grasp, but it is brought about by constant, quiet, calm practice and avoidance of emotional agitation and excitement.

Constant, quiet, calm practice means regular periodical practice continued for sufficient time to be effective. The results of this practice are cumulative. Little

appears at the beginning, but much later on. The time given at any one sitting need not be great, for the quality of the work is more important than the quantity. Little and frequently is better than much and rarely. The sittings may be once or twice a day, or even three times if they are short. Once, done well, will bring about rapid progress; three times, done indifferently, will not. Sometimes the people who have the most time to spare succeed the least, because they feel that they have plenty of time and therefore they are not compelled to do their very best immediately; but the man who has only a short time available for his practice feels the need of doing it to perfection. The exercises should be done at least once every day, and always before relaxation and pleasure, not afterwards. They should be done as early in the day as is practicable, not postponed until easier and more pleasurable duties have been fulfilled. Some strictness of rule is necessary, and this is best imposed by ourselves upon ourselves.

NATURAL IMAGES

It will also help in your concentration if you take care to make your images natural and to put them in natural situations. Do not take an object such as a statuette and imagine it as poised in the air before you. In that position there will be a subconscious tendency for you to feel the necessity of holding it in place. Rather imagine that it is standing on a table in front of you, and that the table is in its natural position in

the room. Then launch yourself gently into your concentration by first imagining all the portion of the room which would be normally within range of your vision in front of you ; then pay less attention to the outermost things and close in upon the table bearing the statuette. Finally close in still more till only the little image is left and you have forgotten the rest of the room. Even then, if the other things should come back into your thought do not be troubled about them. You cannot cut off any image in your imagination as with a knife. There will always be a fringe of other things around it, but they will be faint and out of focus.

Just as when you focus your eye on a physical object the other things in the room are visible in a vague way, so when you focus your mental eye upon the statuette other pictures may arise in its vicinity. But as long as the statuette occupies the centre of your attention and enjoys the full focus of your mental vision you need not trouble about the other thoughts that come in. You will do best to employ the simple formula : "I don't care." If you permit yourself to be troubled by them, they will displace the statuette in the centre of the stage, because you will give attention to them ; but if you see them casually, and without moving your eyes from the statuette, and say : "Oh, are *you* there ? All right, stay if you like, go if you like ; I don't care," they will quietly disappear when you are not looking. You cannot have the satisfaction of seeing them go, any more than you can have the pleasure of watching yourself go to sleep. But why should you want it ?

Make your object natural, and fully so, by investing it with all its usual qualities. If it is a solid thing, make it solid in your imagination, not like a picture. If it is colored, let the color shine, and be sensible of its weight, as you would if it were a physical object. Things that are naturally still should appear positively still in your image, and moving things definitely moving—such as trees, whose leaves and branches may be shaking and rustling in the wind, as fishes swimming or birds flying, or persons walking and talking, or a river running along with pleasant tinkling sounds and glancing lights.

CONFIDENCE

Confidence in oneself is also a great help to success in concentration, especially when it is allied to some knowledge of the way in which thoughts work, and of the great fact that they exist there when they are out of sight. Just as the working of hands and feet and eyes, and every other part of the physical body, depends upon inner organs of the body upon whose functioning we may completely rely, so do all the activities of thought that are visible to our consciousness depend upon unseen workings which are utterly dependable.

Every part of the mind's activity is improved by confidence. A good memory, for example, rests almost entirely upon it; the least uncertainty there can shake it very much indeed. I remember as a small boy having been sent by my mother, on some emergency occasion, to purchase some small thing, such as soap

or butter, from a small grocer's shop about half a mile away from our house. She gave me a coin and told me the name of the article which she wanted. I had no confidence in the tailor's art, and certainly would not trust that coin to my pocket. I could not believe, in such an important matter, that the object would still be in the pocket at the end of the journey, so I held the coin very tightly in my hand so as to feel it all the time. I also went along the road repeating the name of the soap, or whatever it was, feeling that if it went out of my consciousness for a moment it would be entirely lost. I had no confidence in the pockets of the mind, although they are in fact even more reliable than those of the tailor. Yet despite my efforts, or more probably on account of them, on entering the little shop and seeing the big shopman looming up above me in a great mass, I did have a paralytic moment in which I could not remember what it was that I had to get.

This is not an uncommon thing, even among adults. I have known many students who seriously jeopardised their success in examinations by exactly the same sort of anxiety. But if one wants to remember it is best to make the fact or idea quite clear mentally, then look at it with calm concentration for a few seconds, and then let it sink out of sight into the depths of the mind. You may then be quite sure that you can recall it with perfect ease when you wish to do so.

This confidence, together with the method of calm looking, will bring about a mood of concentration which can be likened only to that which you gain

when you learn to swim. It may be that one has entered the water many times, that one has grasped it fiercely with the hands and sometimes also with the mouth, only to sink again and again; but there comes an unexpected moment when you suddenly find yourself at home in the water. Thenceforward, whenever you are about to enter the water you almost unconsciously put on a kind of mood for swimming, and that acts upon the body so as to give it the right poise and whatever else may be required for swimming and floating. So in concentration a day will come, if it has not already done so, when you will find that you have acquired the mood of it, and after that you can dwell on a chosen object of thought for as long as you please.

CHAPTER IV

CHAINS OF GOLD

THE WALKING MIND

WE have studied the first process of thought—the way in which every idea opens out in many directions. We have now to consider the second process—the way in which our attention passes on from one idea to another and forms a flow of thought. It is a matter almost of common knowledge that our attention travels among thoughts very much in the same way as our body moves about among things. So close is the similarity that we may say that the attention actually *walks on two feet* from one mental image or idea to another. Suppose, for example, that I start to think about a cat, and a few moments later I find myself thinking about a certain wonderful iron bridge that spans the river Indus between the towns of Sukkur and Rohri. I might imagine, if I did not know the laws governing the process of thought, that my mind had leaped from one of these ideas to the other, that it had merely casually forgotten the first thing and merely casually thought of the other. But if I take the trouble to recall what has happened and to study the matter I shall

find that there was an unbroken chain of images leading from the first to the last, that it was on a definite series of stepping-stones that I crossed between the two. I thought of a cat, then of a cat lying upon a hearth-rug before a fire (a very common thing in Europe, I may remark parenthetically, for the enlightenment of Indian and American friends, among whom the phenomenon is almost unknown), then of hearth-rug without the cat, then of the hearth-rug being made in a factory, then of a particular factory that I knew very well, which was near the river Indus, and then of the scene further up the river where the great bridge already mentioned rises into the air.

The process is just like walking: one mental foot comes down on the idea of the cat, the other moves forward and rests on the idea of the hearth-rug; the first foot is lifted from the cat and moved forward to the factory. When it is settled there the second foot is lifted from the idea of the hearth-rug and brought down upon the river Indus. Next the first foot is removed from the idea of the factory and settled upon the Sukkur bridge, and so on.

The process is also like the beating of the heart. There is first a thought; then it is enlarged by the addition of another; then it is contracted by the elimination of the first. Expansion and contraction thus alternate as regularly as in the beating of the heart. When the expansion takes place consciousness becomes vaguer, for the light of attention is more diffused, because it covers a larger field; but when the contraction takes place the object is vividly illumined

and the consciousness is at its best in point of quality. The contraction is concentration; the expansion is meditation.

Now, two things may happen in this second process of thought. The attention may simply drift from one image to another with no settled purpose or direction, taking at each step the easiest path, following old habits of thought, keeping to the beaten track, or going the easiest way, like a stream of water finding its way down hill. Or it may be set to the work of exploration and discovery in a certain definite direction decided upon before the process begins. The first of these alternatives is mind-wandering; the second is thinking. Some minds scarcely do anything but wander; others are capable of thought. It is our second purpose, when we have done some exercises in concentration for the opening of magic boxes, to practise another form of concentration for keeping the attention to a definite line of thought. Thus men may convert their thought-activities from streams of mud and sand into chains of gold.

Let us define some of our words, and see where we stand. (1) The attention is the will, which is ourself awake, expanding and contracting like a heart, spanning portions of the mental world as with two feet. (2) The mental world is a subjective region full of ideas. As the attention poises itself on one of these, whether simple or complex (a larger or smaller portion of that world) it can look around and see some of the mental scenery, the ideas connected with that upon which it rests. (3) Thought is the process of moving from one

foot to the other. Ideas are mental objects; thought is mental travel; the will is the traveller. Let us examine these more fully.

THE WORLD OF THE MIND

The body in which any one of us lives is a vehicle. In it the man and his mind are carried about the world. It bears with it also a bag of tools, which are the sense-organs which inform him of what exists and occurs within their reach. Suppose I stop writing for a moment and look around. In front of me are the table and chairs, on and against the walls are bookshelves, cabinets, a clock, pictures, calendars and numerous other things. I look through the windows and there are the tops of the palm and mango trees, the white March clouds of Madras, and beyond them the ethereal blue. I attend to my ears instead of my eyes—a crow squawks over on the left; the clock ticks on the wall; footsteps shuffle along the corridor; there is a murmur of distant voices; a squirrel chirrups near at hand; the pandits are droning down below; a typewriter rattles somewhere else; and behind all these is the constant roar of the breakers of the Bay of Bengal on the Adyar beach half a mile away. I attend more closely, and hear the blood rumbling in my ears, and the long-drawn distant whistle of some obscure physiological process. I turn my attention to my skin, and now I feel the pen upon which my fingers gently press, the clothes upon my back, the chair on which I sit (I might say “in which” if it were more comfortable),

the floor upon which my feet are placed ; the warm soft wind pressing upon and wafting my hands and face.

Thus the senses, carried about in this vehicle of my body, which is the instrument of my will and the focus for my consciousness in the outer world, bring me into touch with some part of that vast world in which they exist. It is, however, but a tiny fragment of that world. I have travelled about in this body for a number of years, seen, heard and felt many things in different parts of the world, but how little of that experience of mine can exist in my consciousness at any moment, and how inexpressibly small even the whole of it has been in comparison with all that exists which I have not seen or known !

Of the same nature is the inner world of the mind. There also is a vast region of true ideas, some of which I now know with the vehicle of my mind, but most of which remains for me the apparently unlimited unknown. In that world also I have an instrument ; by my will it travels about in the world of thought, pursues a course of mental life, just as my body lives and moves about in the outer world. That vehicle is the mind, the focus of my consciousness for mental things. Let us take another simile, and say that this mental body, in which I am able to attend to ideas, is like a little fish swimming about in a vast ocean of ideas, and there seeing and informing me of what comes within the range of its limited faculties. It cannot see beyond a short range ; it cannot leap through space ; it must travel through intermediate points to

pass from one place to another, from one idea to another.

THE TRACK OF THE FISH

It is this little fish of attention that you have now to control, so that it may (1) always swim in the direction that you have chosen, and (2) extend and improve its range of vision, its ability to present before you fully and clearly the events with which it meets as it travels through the world of thought. The concentration already practised will have improved its vision; now we shall have to deal with its power to travel.

When the foot of thought comes down upon an idea in the world of mind it does so like that of an elephant, which spreads when it settles, and covers a certain amount of space. Therefore when you turn your attention to an idea you do not find a solitary, clear-cut thing, but one thing associated with many others. The touch of that foot opens the magic box. Materially that is the case also; you cannot find anything by itself—books without eyes to read them, pens without paper to write on, shoes without feet to be covered, cups without mouths to be poured into, houses without people to live in them, are unthinkable things. But every idea has a centre where the vision is clear, from which it gradually shades away. Just as when I fix my eyes upon the ink-bottle before me I see also vaguely other things on the table, the articles of furniture to left and right, the trees in the garden outside, a multitude of details; so also when I fix my

attention on a particular thought I find a mass of vague thoughts around it, gradually shading off, becoming more indefinite as more remote, and finally losing themselves at no definite limit. As the attention passes from object to object in this field of attention it finds no limit: its horizon for ever recedes as it approaches it.

We have already seen that when I thought of a cat I thought of a hearth-rug (which is one of the ideas that can come out of that magic box), but I might apparently equally well have thought of whiskers, milk, claws, mice or midnight music of a sort. One of these secondary ideas was sure to form the next stepping-point in my chain of ideas or flow of thought. This chain of thoughts presents an unbroken succession in the inner life. Each idea is succeeded by another, like the links in a chain. As in time things follow one after another, only two moments with their contents being linked directly together, so in the flow of mental activity images follow one after another, only two being directly connected.

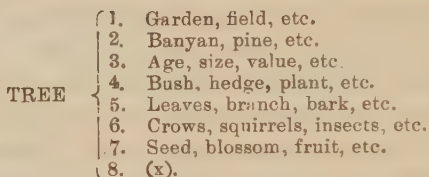
This flow of mental activity is nothing more than the track of the fish of attention, as it passes in this direction or in that. There is some kind of a choice at every step in the process, and it is instructive to observe to what distant goals every parting of the ways may lead, since every idea calls up such a great variety of associations. When I look at the banyan tree outside my verandah, I see and hear the throngs of crows and squirrels; and now any thought of a banyan tree will at once bring up within its circle a

vision of this particular tree, with its spreading branches and hanging roots, the fern-pots beneath it, the audacious crows and the chattering, shrieking, striped brown squirrels. But at once thoughts of other kinds of trees also enter into the circle of attention, though further from the centre: the tall, straight palm, the wrinkled oak, the slender poplar, the sad, shorn willow of central England, the trim pine among the northern snows. Then again, as I view its spreading branches and its many trunks bearing the weight of giant arms ten centuries old, my mind runs back to the history which it might tell—of the floods of the river running near, of the building of houses and the making of roads, and far back in the past of the breezy jungle growth, the jackals and the tigers, the birds and the monkeys, and the countless ants and scorpions and snakes which have nestled in its hollows and lived among its branches in the centuries past. If my mood changes again I might notice its vast extent—a mountain of wood—and think how an army might shelter beneath it, how it would build ten houses or make a thousand roaring fires. Thus the banyan tree calls up different kinds of thoughts *according to my mood.*

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

The manner in which anyone's thought will turn at the parting of the ways which occurs at every step in thought depends upon his mood. Consider this idea of the tree, which has so many thoughts attached to it,

such as those represented above, or in the following diagram.



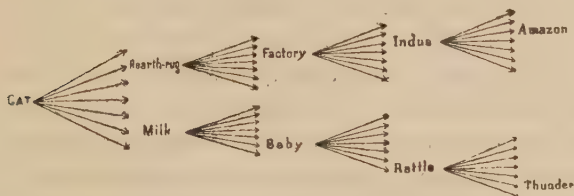
If I were a farmer my thought might pass along line 7 to an idea of fruit. Fruit would then become the centre of another circle of ideas, those belonging to lines 1 to 6 having been passed by, almost or entirely unnoticed. The mind might then pass on to the idea of a market, a thought which has no direct connection with the tree, and the tree is now forgotten as the mind pursues its rambling course.

If I were a merchant my thought might find itself somewhere on line 3, interesting in lumber, which is directly connected with the thought of the tree, and from that it might pass on to the current prices of timber, and on to financial and banking questions and other matters still more remote.

A naturalist might pass along line 6; a huntsman or a pleasure-seeker along line 1; a philosopher along line 3 or line 7. Almost all would lose sight of the tree at the third step of thought. The lines here given are numbered only as illustrations, for no scientific classification is especially intended, the radiations of thought being more numerous than this.

It is marvellous to what an extent the future depends upon the choice I make at every moment as to my

next step in thought. The following diagram illustrates how slight is the parting of the ways of thought, but how wide asunder the paths soon go :



THE POWER OF THE MOOD

It is not a choice between two ways that is being offered at every moment, but among many. The attention is being called from a great number of directions at once. There is an endless competition among the objects of the senses for our notice ; there is likewise an endless competition within the world of the mind for our attention. The little fish finds itself surrounded with various alluring baits. Which will he take at any given time ? Will he prefer the hearth-rug or the milk ? In the succession of ideas, what is the nature of that internal mood which determines that one idea rather than another shall be appropriated, shall be raised to the throne in our minds, in the succession that takes place there ? Why should it not be some other idea, which is quite as closely associated with the original one ?

Let me put the problem in another way. Suppose I am sitting at my desk in the centre of my room when

suddenly all the four doors open at once, and with the precision of the cuckoo from an old cottage clock my friends Smith, Brown, Jones and Robinson enter and exclaim with one voice: "Ah, Wood, I want to consult you about something!" Which will first claim my surprised attention? This will certainly depend upon something. It will depend upon the *mood of my mind*, the direction in which the fish was swimming at the moment of surprise. The only other thing which could determine it would be some unusual peculiarity in attire or gesture, which we are not supposing to be present. If Brown were dressed as a Turk he would claim first attention; but in the absence of any such startling or abnormal thing, nothing but the mood of the mind at the moment could determine which selection the attention would make.

Again, suppose that I am engaged in the work of putting a book through the press, and someone comes to the door and calls out: "Proofs!" I have visions of printed sheets and the drudgery of correcting them. If I am engaged in studying a scientific problem the same sound will immediately awaken a totally different set of ideas. Here it is clear that the difference which determines the consequence lies in the mind, not in the outside world. Similarly, if Mr. Lincoln Inn, the eminent barrister, is in London, and someone utters in his hearing the word "bag," he at once thinks of briefs and all the paraphernalia of his profession; but if it is the vacation and he is engaged in his favorite sport of shooting upon the Scottish moors the word at once brings before him gratifying visions

of forlorn-looking birds tied by the legs, and pleasant recollections of his skill and prowess and past triumphs on the field of sport.

POLARISATION OF THOUGHT

At different times different moods—purposes, habits and interests—dominate our minds, and it is the mood which is the cause that one idea rather than another should be selected of the many that surround every thought and object. As a powerful magnet polarises soft iron within a considerable area, not only in immediate proximity, so does the temporary or permanent mood polarise each incoming idea as soon as it approaches the outermost sphere of the field of attention.

Most of us are familiar with the schoolboy experiment with a test-tube loosely filled with iron filings. We corked it and laid it flat upon the table, and as we passed a magnet slowly over it we watched the filings rise and turn over and lay themselves all in the same direction, so that they became a lot of little magnets all acting together. And we then found by experiment that the tube of filings had become a magnet. At first the filings lay higgledy-piggledy; even if they had then been magnets the influence of one would have neutralised that of its neighbor, because of their different directions; but now that they lie in line they act together as a powerful magnet, influencing all soft iron that is brought near to them. So also if our thoughts lie higgledy-piggledy in the mind, pointing

in all directions, their effects will destroy one another. Concentration must be practised in order to establish a prevailing mood, so that all your ideas may be polarised to it. Understanding this, we realise that the thoughts that we are thinking when we are not deliberately or busily thinking, those which form the background of the mind, are far more important than our busy thoughts of the moments when we are dealing with affairs that require attention.

We have seen that the train of thought follows the mood. We can now understand that success in the pursuit of any aim may be assured by our establishing a permanent mood in its direction. When this is done, even the most trifling or the most adverse events will fall into line and prove of service to us in the gaining of our end. This fact was well expressed by the great Roman philosopher Epictetus, when he said: "There is only one thing for which God has sent me into the world, and that is to perfect my own nature in all kinds of strength and virtue, and there is no experience in all the world which I cannot use for that end."

It is the will that controls thought, that can form a mood covering a period of time or a specific enterprise. Just as you can determine to wake at a certain time to-morrow morning, and you will so wake if you have confidence, so you can impose upon your mind a mood of mental exploration in a prescribed direction for a definite period of time.

Exercise 3. Fifth week. Practise thinking towards a definite goal in the following manner. Open a book at random, and note the first name of an object that

catches your eye ; this object will be your starting-point. Next open it at a different page, and again take the first name ; this will be your goal. Then think consecutively from the starting-point to the goal. For example, I have turned up "law," then "portal" ; I must think away from "law," keeping "portal" in view until I reach it. It proves to be an easy matter, for I think of a certain Law Court that I know, which has a strikingly gloomy entrance. A second case : "cloak" and "radiance". Again it is easy, for I think of an opera cloak of a rich gold color that my wife sometimes wears, and that leads on to radiance. Suppose, however, I turn up something else instead of radiance. It proves to be "fruit". Now I am not moved to think of the opera cloak. I look at the idea "cloak," thinking also "fruit," and letting that idea govern my thinking. Something comes in a moment, and I find myself thinking of a covering, the skin of an orange, the fruit itself. A third case : "turmoil" and "wall" : I might think of many things in connection with turmoil, but under the present conditions I find myself thinking of a mediæval battle against the wall of an old fort near which I once had a College.

These exercises will help you to realise how a mood imposed by the will actually works, and will assist you to impose one permanently or temporarily on the mind at any time, so that your life may be concentrated on a definite purpose. In addition to its general purpose in life, you will find this power to impose moods very useful as enabling you to turn rapidly and effectively from one piece of work to another, and from waking to sleeping.

CHAPTER V

CONCENTRATION IN DAILY LIFE

OUTWARD AND INWARD SUCCESS

CONCENTRATION is not an end in itself, but a means to develop the will so that it may make the entire life purposeful. Polarise your entire life—all your actions, your feeling, your thinking—by establishing a permanent mood towards success in some line of human endeavor. It may be the mood of an artist, a devotee, a scientist, a poet, a philosopher, a philanthropist ; it may concern art, religion, science, interpretation, philosophy, thoughts and deeds of affection and kindness, or works of commerce or government ; it may aim at skill in action, or intense and expanded feeling, or a clear and deep understanding of life ; it may seek self-government, or the mastery of environment and success in outward things. That is for you to choose ; but choose something definite and polarise your whole life to that. Do not be one of those people who elect to follow no definite road, and drift hither and thither towards an old age filled chiefly with disappointments and regrets.

Such an aim must be benevolent, because the man who has it is free from bondage to things. You cannot be calm and strong if your success depends upon position, power, dignity and security for your own personal self. Your eagerness to have such outward things would mark your dependence upon them, and that dependence would open you up to anxiety about them, and to agitation and distress as they come and go. There is no greatness without goodness as well, no outward success without the inward success of a strong will full of good-will towards others. Outward success without the inward strength is an illusion. I knew very well a family of five brothers. Three are old men in the sixties and seventies, the other two died in the forties. The two who died are usually called the successful members of the family. While comparatively young those two became successful in business. But unfortunately they had not the inward strength to profit by their outward prosperity, and their success proved a curse instead of a blessing. They ate and drank more than was desirable; they did not take any exercise; they indulged their bodies, knowing quite well the danger of it all. At the age of about thirty-five they were both fat and ailing; at forty they were permanently in the doctor's hands; at about forty-five they were both dead, after ten years of utterly miserable life. The other three brothers are hale and hearty, surrounded by happy families. Thus outward success without inward success leads to failure; but inward success leads to outward success as well.

Success depends upon what you seek and how you seek. If you have said that you will succeed in anything, you will without fail, no matter how lofty the aim, if your will is in accord with the Great Law. If it is not you cannot really will ; you are only attracted by something outside, and filled for the time being with a ruling desire.

If what you seek is the idle satisfaction of the body or of the senses, or even of the mind, you cannot really say : " I will," for you are the slave of the pleasures of the lower life and you will be drawn wherever the objects of the senses may lead. But if you say : " I will have power ; I will have love ; I will have knowledge," you must choose the right way to seek it, and see that others also are more powerful and freer because you are so, that they have more love because you have much to give, that they have more knowledge because it has come to you. A rich man living among poor men is not really rich—that is an illusion. If in pride you hold and withhold power, in order to feel your supremacy over others, you are not obeying the Great Law ; you are the slave to the base emotion of pride. If in your seeking of knowledge your aim is to shine and feel superior, or if you seek love of others for yourself, that you may multiply yourself in them, that they may think well of you and speak highly of you and be drawn to seek your company, once more you are disobeying the Great Law, and are a slave to the base emotion of pride. And that pride, when it is thwarted by the accidents of life, will be turned into envy, jealousy, anger and fear, and you will be torn

by the conflicting winds of circumstance; you will be drowned in the ocean of wishes, and will be unable to say: "I will."

Even more will this be so if you seek the satisfaction of the senses or the luxuries of the body; then indeed you will be a slave. Corrupted with wishes and regrets, there will be no peace and power within you. Indeed, you must train all your vehicles—your body, feelings and mind—to orderly activity, removing from them all traces of sloth and heaviness, agitation and excitement of every kind, so that they will be perfect instruments for carrying out your will in the regions in which they work.

The first thing to do is to select the mood that you will have; then eliminate all those things that can agitate the mind in any way. You must try to get rid of every trace of anger, irritation, anxiety, uncertainty and fear. When such qualities are allowed in the mind there can be no real exercise of will, no real permanence of mood. Success in the practice of mind-control is dependent upon steadiness of mood, and if you are still so infantile in character as to be swayed to anger, anxiety and fear by the so-called accidents of life, you cannot until you command yourself have anything better than shifting moods and a wandering mind. Only the things that are pure and good and kind and calm can be permanent; pride, anger and fear and all their kin are of the essence of agitation and impermanence. Therefore the mood you select must be compatible with your best and most unselfish ideal—unselfish not only for yourself but also for

others. You can no longer regard life as a battle with others or for a few others, nor desire to control others ; if your aim is the gradual mastery of self and the full development of your powers, your only possible attitude towards others, to all and all the time, is that of a benevolent intention to share with them the freedom and power that you are winning for yourself.

THE FOLLY OF WISHING

Then you must give up wishing, for you cannot both wish and will. The two things are utterly incompatible. This can be shown by a very simple argument. Suppose I consider whether I will or will not pick up my pen. I cannot wish in this matter ; I must decide either to pick it up or to leave it where it is. I know quite well that it weighs only an ounce or two and that I am free and strong enough to pick it up, and therefore I may say : "I will pick it up," or : "I will not pick it up." But if I knew or thought that the pen weighed half a ton I might find myself saying : "Oh, I do wish that I could pick up that pen !" Wishing is an acknowledgment of inability. It is a declaration of dependence upon external events. It is waiting, not working, and wasting time and energy while you wait, and opening the door to every sort of weakness that will spoil you for your opportunity when it does come. Wise men do not seek opportunity, but they seek to be prepared for it. Willing is the use of your own power ; the man of will has no use for

wishes, which would waste his time and sap his moral and spiritual strength. Therefore he does not complain against his environment, does not grumble about the things that fortune brings to him through no apparent actions of his own. He is like the sage mentioned in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. "Content with that which comes to him without effort," and determined to make the fullest possible use of what so comes.

Dare you face the mental and emotional shock of resolving that you will accept the facts of life and not wish that nature and the Great Law had put different material in your reach? At least you must say, every time that you find yourself wishing: "Stop that; I will not have it!"

It is worth while to dwell a little in thought upon what this change of policy would mean in your life. What would it mean to you when you rise in the morning, when you eat, when you lie down to sleep? What when you meet your companions, your friends, your so-called enemies? What when you lose your appointment or money, or meet with an accident, or fall ill, and your family suffers? Sit down, and think over all the disagreeable things that may happen within the next week, and see in each case what it would mean to you. You would not wish them to be otherwise; you would say to each of them: "What are you for; what use can I make of you?" You would not sink down and say: "I am sorry—," or: "I wish—". You would get up and say: "I will—," or: "I will not—". There is no *hope* for you in this mood—but there is certainty. There is no expectation, but there

is knowledge. There is no fear, but confidence in the Great Law within you and in all things.

Every morning, for a week, before you begin the day, spend five minutes in thinking over this strong outlook upon life. Every night, before you go to rest, spend five minutes in glancing back to see how you have maintained your determination during the past day. Do not ask yourself especially: "In what have I erred?" but: "In what have I succeeded?" Each day will tell its tale of achievement. Do not wish, nor regret, nor hope. But when you are about to sleep, whisper gently: "I will." And when you wake, whisper gently: "I will."

ECONOMY OF FORCE

If you mean to become a man or woman of concentration your next task will be for a time to watch the little things, to economise all your powers, and waste none in idle thought, or in idle emotion, or in idle action.

During the day do not do one thing while thinking about another. Thought and action must be unified—think no thought without reference to action or intended action; perform no action without intention. By this practice all day long the mind and body are taught to act together, without any waste of physical or mental energy, and thus you will suppress all idle thought.

As regards *idle action*, avoid all the small wasteful activities and mannerisms in which people

semi-unconsciously indulge, such as shaking the knees or swinging the foot over the knee, uttering useless phrases, such as "you see," "of course," "er-er," twirling the moustache, scratching, biting or picking the nails, pulling at buttons or watch-guards, purposeless conversations, and so forth. Every action or word should have a purpose behind it. The larger wasteful activities must also be proscribed, such as lying in bed late in the morning, wasting time at night, eating unnecessary food, struggling to obtain things which are not really required. Also bodily excitement and nervous and muscular tension are to be avoided as far as possible. These wasteful habits are difficult to change suddenly, and it is better to make a resolution to operate for an hour daily and carry it out, gradually increasing the time, than to resolve to change every useless habit at once and fail to carry out the resolution.

As regards *idle thought*, avoid the habits of lying awake in bed and thinking things over before going to sleep, and of lying in a semi-dream state on awakening. Thinking should be done in a positive position and with intention, not in a semi-sleep. Then, do not dwell again and again on the same thought or argument. If anything requires to be thought over, bring forward and consider all the facts bearing upon it, arrive at a conclusion, and then dismiss the matter from the mind : and never consider it again unless you can bring some new facts to bear upon it. If the reasons for and against a course of action seem equal, it cannot matter much which way the decision goes—toss up a coin and

have done with the trouble, but do not permit the mind to revolve the matter again and again. If a difficulty arises, do not procrastinate, deal with it completely there and then, and dismiss its further consideration, or appoint a special time for settling it; do not on any account let anxiety, fear and distress ramble about the mind, poisoning and enfeebling it. Avoid thinking *too much* about what you are going to do—do it. Do not think about what others say about you, except to extract from it the element of truth which is always there. On no account make the imperfections of others a subject of your meditations. You need your energy and time for your own work, and besides, dwelling on others' defects tends to develop the same weaknesses in yourself. If the brain is torpid do not eat after dark or sleep after dawn, and take mild exercise and fresh air.

There remains still the removal of *idle emotions*. The seeking of small pleasures which are not recreative, and the indulgence in emotion without its corresponding action and thought are weakening to the will. Your chief purpose should be your chief pleasure—if it is not so either the purpose or the pleasure is unhealthy.

TRUE WORK IS PLAY

This strong outlook upon life may seem somewhat hard, as filling the day too much with work. But that is an illusion. Work need not be toil and drudgery; in fact, its true character is play. Drudgery is merely action; it does not create the man who does it. But

the least bit of work done well, done heartily, done better than ever before, is good for the evolution of the man who does it. And it is only by concentration that you can do anything better than you have done it before. If, in writing a letter, one is at pains to do it neatly, even beautifully, and to express oneself briefly, clearly and gracefully, one has developed hand, eye and brain, thought-power, love-power and will-power. True work, such as that of the artist, is full of creative influence and joy.

Do your work wisely, so that it shall be play. There is no sense in overwork. The man who does it achieves less than he who knows how to measure his strength. All our work ought to create new strength in us so that to-morrow will be better than to-day, but work that is so hard or prolonged that it leaves us weaker to-morrow is no true work at all, but waste.

There is no clear dividing line between toil and play. If one goes out, for example, on a long ride, the earlier part of the journey may be full of delight for both man and horse, but insensibly that passes away as fatigue increases, until suddenly the man realises that the ride which was play in the beginning has now become work, or rather drudgery. All work is in reality play, when a man realises what good can come out of it, and when there is no fatigue or overstrain.

We have much to learn from the animals and even from the plants in this respect. "Grow as the flower grows," says *Light on the Path*, "opening your heart to the sun." Said Jesus: "Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I

say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." It is deadly fear of the morrow that makes men's work a toil, that makes them sweat in bitterness. But the Law says: "Do the wise and right thing to-day, and leave the result to take care of itself." This is not a doctrine of idleness, but of work that is play instead of toil.

An illustration of this is to be seen in the way in which different people take a long journey. One man will get into the train at Chicago, and remain in a fever of impatience for the three or four days' time which the train takes to go to San Francisco, its destination. He has fixed his mind on something that he wants to do there; in the meantime his journey is a toil and a misery. Another finds a thousand things of interest on the way—the scenery, the people, the train itself; for him the journey is a happy holiday. And in the end he has accomplished much more than the other man. People seek novelty because their own shallow power of thought soon exhausts the surface possibilities of familiar things; it is a step beyond that to have some purpose for the future strongly in view; but it is a step further still if you can be full of purpose and at the same time awake to the deeper values of all common things by the way.

The Hindu villager lives very near to nature, and offers us a sample in the human kingdom of man growing as the flower grows. A man will set out from his village to collect the mail from the post office or to dispatch some letters there, perhaps sixteen or twenty miles away. He does not tramp along stolidly

and painfully, jarring his nerves with the graceless movements that spring from a discontented or impatient mind. The vision of his mail is not a mania that shuts out all other interests, and makes him curse the length of the track. No, there are insects, birds, flowers, trees, streams, clouds in the sky, fields, houses, animals and people, and lastly the blessed earth itself, to lie on which for a while is to be on velvet in the divine arms. Heavens, how little the white man knows of life, how much of toil! The Hindus have long held that God plays. When people realise this truth they will cease to long for rest, or to crave for a goal.

Organise your life wisely so that it may be pure delight, unmixed happiness. Such a condition makes for the swiftest progress, the greatest success. Toil is not meritorious nor especially profitable, and it is only rarely necessary.

THE FOUR GREAT ENEMIES

It is said in an old Indian book that there are four great enemies to human success: (1) a sleepy heart, (2) human passions, (3) a confused mind, and (4) attachment to anything but Brahman; and by what is there called Brahman is meant the Great Law.

A sleepy heart—that means that the body is lazy and luxurious, that its activities are slothful or else ill-regulated or over-excited.

Human passions—that means that the senses or the emotions are ill-conditioned in their action.

A confused mind--that means one that is still sluggish or incoherent and uncontrolled.

In mastering all these you must not aim at repression or destruction, but at well-regulated activity, that is culture. Physical culture involves the suppression of irregular activities in the body. It demands an ordered life, with well-proportioned exercise, nourishment and rest. The governing of the natural appetites which it requires does not nullify their power, but tunes them up; and the sense of vigorous life is increased, not diminished, by this control.

These things are true also of the mind. It too requires regular and well-proportioned exercise, nourishment and rest. Its natural appetites also need to be controlled and governed, and when this is done there is no loss of mental vigor, but an enhancement of it.

Exercise is something more than the mere use of faculty. A man breaking stones on the road is using his muscles, and certainly in a long time the muscles he uses become strong. A man who carries out a definite system of physical exercise for a short time every day soon becomes stronger than the man who wields the hammer all day long. So also, a man who spends his time in the study of mathematics, literature, languages, science, philosophy, or any other subject, is using his mind, and thinking may become facile to him. But a man who deliberately carries out a definite system of mental exercise for a short time every day, soon gains greater control of his mind than he who merely reads and cursorily thinks all day long.

In fact, the need of mental training, of regular, orderly, purposeful exercise of the mind, is far greater than that of the body in most cases ; for at our stage of growth most men's bodily activities are well-ordered and controlled, and the body is obedient to their will, but their minds are usually utterly disobedient, idle and luxurious.

In the sixth chapter of this book various exercises for the body have been prescribed. These are intended to regulate and calm it. Calmness does not mean dulness or immobility. It means regular motion and is quite compatible with rapid motion. So also control of mind does not mean dulness or stupidity. It means very clear-cut and regular thought, velocity and strength of mind, vivid and living ideas.

Now, without the preliminary training which makes the body calm, control of mind becomes very, very difficult. A certain small measure of austerity is imperatively necessary for great success in concentration. The reason for this is to be discovered in the basic rule of the process. That rule is this : the body must be still, the mind alert.

Determined perseverance does not usually walk hand in hand with absence of excitement in human life. Yet for success the mind must be calm and free from wishes, which always bring exciting desires, fear, doubt, expectancy, pleasurable and painful feelings and thoughts. The ideal aimed at should be clearly pictured in the mind, and then kept constantly before it. Such a prevailing mood will tend to polarise all

thought, desire and activity to its direction. As a traveller may follow a star through mazes of forest and trackless country ; so will the persistent ideal guide its votary infallibly through all difficult and complex situations in life. All that is necessary is constant practice and absence of agitation.

Constant practice and absence of excitement or agitation—these two rules are always prescribed ; and do you not see that they are the natural accompaniments of will ? If you have said : “ I will,” not only in words, but also in act, and thought, and feeling, will you not always be using your powers to gain your end, always be free from the excitement that attends upon wishing ? If you want a light, says an Indian proverb, what is the good of merely talking about a lamp ? If you are sick, says another, can you cure your disease simply by calling out the names of medicines ? Hidden treasure does not reveal itself by your simply commanding : “ Come out ! ” You must find the place, remove the stones and dig.

And if thus you work and practise, and never wish, and have no attachment to anything but Brahman, success will soon be yours, and power and love and knowledge will be yours of which the king upon his throne, the impassioned lover with his mistress, and the scholar in his study do not even dream. For the Great Law is the source of all power, of all knowledge and of all love, and when your consciousness is not attached to anything but Brahman, success will be yours now and all the time. In the distant future, do you say ? Is it not sure ?

“Behold, I show you Truth ! Lower than hell,
Higher than Heaven, outside the utmost stars,
Farther than Brahm doth dwell,

“Before beginning, and without an end,
As space eternal and as surety sure,
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
Only its laws endure.”¹

And what is sure is just as good as if it had already happened ; so if you will not have it otherwise, even now success is yours all the time, not only in the end.

¹ *The Light of Asia.*

CHAPTER VI

CONTROL OF THE BODY AND SENSES

How to Sit

FOR the successful practice of concentration it is necessary to train the body so that it will remain quiet for as long as you want to sit. Perhaps you have never before sat for a few minutes without moving. Try it now. Do not provide repose which would tend to sloth or sleepiness, but try a few times to sit quite still for five or ten minutes, without supporting the back above the waist, with the eyes closed, without feeling either restless or sleepy. Remember that bodily attitudes are associated with states of feeling, such as lying down with sleep, and kneeling with prayer. That has to be taken into consideration when you are selecting a posture, but there is no objection to your lying down to concentrate or meditate, so long as you find that it does not conduce to sleepiness.

Try to select an attitude for concentration which will be free from disturbing associations. It is generally found advantageous to sit upright with the eyes closed, the hands resting, and the head and neck straight but not stiff. You will probably find that the

body is not so obedient as you would have it to be. It is often restless and impatient or troubled by trifling sensations, even when you have removed any causes of discomfort that there may be. Do not permit this. The body must be your servant. Will you be master? Raise yourself up, and say: "I will." Do not wish, but say: "I will." If the body is not bright and obedient, train it. To-morrow, and each day for one month rise in the morning half an hour before your usual time, and do the following exercises.

1. Standing still—five minutes.
2. Relaxing—five minutes.
3. Nerve exercises—seven minutes.
4. Breathing exercises—eight minutes.
5. Stretching and bending exercises—five minutes.

Do all these faithfully at the same time every day for one month. If you miss one day begin again on the next and do the exercises for one full month without missing once. This will give you an opportunity of doing something that the body does not like to do, that is at once beneficial to the body and valuable training for the will. Train your body as a fancier would train a prize dog; do not starve it or beat it, but do not indulge it in idleness and luxury. If you find that under this new regime old dirt comes to the surface, and the body becomes weak and ill—an effect due to past indulgence, not to present strain—stop the practice for a week. Then begin all over again, and thus go on again and again until the body is a sound, clean, strong and supple instrument for carrying out your will. Repeat the effort again

and again until the evil effects entirely disappear. You can, if you will.

THE FIVE BODILY EXERCISES

1. *The Standing Exercise.* Go into a room where you will not be disturbed, and stand erect, at attention, preferably before a long mirror, having placed your watch in sight. Stand perfectly still for five minutes. The eyes may blink; no attention need be paid to them. The body must not be allowed to sway, nor the fingers to twitch; and no notice whatever must be taken of any slight sensations. The mind may occupy itself in thinking in turn of the different parts of the body, and seeing that they are still. Probably the little fingers, or the shoulders, or some other part of the body, will ache, but no sympathy should be accorded them.

2. *Relaxing Exercises.* These are intended to teach the body to be still without being tense. To get the feel of relaxation try the following experiment. Raise the left elbow above the shoulder, and let the left hand be in front of the chest, with the palm downward. Let the right elbow be at the right side, and raise the right hand so that the down-turned fingers of the left hand may grasp it. Hold the fingers of the right hand by the left hand. Slowly withdraw the energy of the right arm till you feel that there is no life in it, that it is quite relaxed. Then suddenly open the left hand, letting go of the right. If it *falls* lifeless, you have succeeded in relaxing.

Having thus learned what relaxation feels like, you need not repeat the experiment, but proceed as follows : lie down flat on the back on the floor or on a board (not on a bed or couch) and try to sink into the ground, as if it were soft. This will give you a luxurious feeling of relaxation of the whole body. If necessary, relax the body piecemeal, beginning at the feet and going up to the head. To relax the eyes—an important matter—imagine black. Always relax in this manner before going to sleep.

As an extreme measure, should the others fail, one may learn relaxation by sleeping for a few nights on a table, with only a sheet between the body and the board, that is, with nothing to soften the surface. It is possible to go to sleep in a soft bed without being relaxed, but it is not so easy to do so on a board. On the hard flat surface you *must* relax in order to be comfortable. Then, when you know what the mood of relaxation is like, and you can do it at will, it will be permissible to revert to the soft bed.

3. *Nerve Exercises.* These are performed either by holding a part of the body still and preventing it from trembling, or by moving it very, very slowly. Hold out the hand with the fingers a little apart and watch them intently. They move a little, and you begin to feel a kind of creaking inside the joints. Try to keep them perfectly still by an effort of the will. After a few minutes they begin to tingle, and you feel a leakage at the ends, as though something were going off. Send this back up the arm and into the body by the

will. Next, stand before a larger mirror, and move the arm by imperceptible degrees from the side into a horizontal position in front. It should move without any jerking, and so slowly that you can scarcely see it moving. Again, sit with your back to the light, facing a large object, such as a wardrobe or a bookcase. Without moving your head, start at one corner of the object, and let your eyes move, without jumping, very slowly round the outline of it and along its prominent lines, back to the original point. These three exercises should take five minutes each, and should be done on successive days.

4. *Breathing Exercises.* Sit in your usual position for concentration. Draw the breath in slowly and evenly, through both nostrils, while mentally counting eight, or for five seconds; hold it in while counting eight; and breathe out slowly and evenly while counting eight. Repeat this eight times. While the breath is in the body it should not be held with the throat muscles, but by holding the chest muscles out and the diaphragm down by an act of will. To cork the breath in at the throat is injurious. The whole process should be easy, pleasant and natural.

Follow this by gently drawing the lungs full of air, and then, holding the breath as before, press the breath down as low as possible in the body by sinking the diaphragm. Then press the air up into the chest (without raising or moving the shoulders), so that the abdomen goes in. Thus press the air up and down, slowly and deliberately, five or six times, and then slowly and gently breathe out.

Thirdly, inhale the breath as before, press it down as low as possible, and draw in more air, so that both the lower and the upper parts of the lungs are filled tight. Then suck in and swallow more air through the mouth until you feel slight muscular discomfort. Release the air slowly, from the chest first.

These breathing exercises are intended to make the body bright and cheerful, and to counteract the natural suspension of breath outside the body which often occurs during strong concentration of mind, as distinguished from the suspension of breath inside the body which accompanies physical effort. If carried on for too long at one time they tend to inhibit its sensibility. For the practice of concentration unusual forms of breathing, such as very slow or long breathing and the practice of breathing up one nostril and down the other are not required; and they are to be avoided as highly dangerous.

5. *Stretching and Bending Exercises.* Stand with the heels together; raise the hands above the head; bend forward to touch the toes without bending the knees; return to the upright position, reaching as high as possible, standing on the toes.

Stand as before; let the hands and arms rest straight down the sides, with the backs of the hands turned outwards from the knees; slowly raise the unbent arms outwards and upwards, until the backs of the hands touch above the head; stretch, rising on the toes and looking upwards; slowly return.

Stand once more with the hands at the sides, palms inwards; lean over slowly to one side until the hand

sinks below the knee, while the other hand is curled up under the armpit ; slowly swing back to the opposite side, stretching the body all the time.

Perform all the exercises with an even movement and concentrated thought, for one minute each. Finally stand, raise one foot from the floor by bending the knee ; now raise the other and lower the first, and thus run as hard as you can for one minute, without moving along. In this exercise the two feet must not touch the ground at the same time.

CONTROL OF SENSATION

At the end of the month, though you can sit quietly, and the body has become lighter and brighter, so that you can get up like a cat in the morning, you may still find yourself troubled by outside things during concentration or meditation. Noises, for example, may divert you. In that case spare fifteen minutes a day for a month for practice on the following lines.

This is necessary because complete seclusion and quietude are not usually obtainable even for a short time. However fortunate you may be in your circumstances, you cannot escape entirely from light, sound and wind, and other interruptions. This, however, need not matter much, if you train your senses to ignore the records of the sense-organs. When we are deeply engrossed in a book we may be perfectly unaware that birds are singing outside and trees shaking and rustling in the wind, or that the fire is

crackling on the hearth and the clock ticking on the mantel-shelf, though these sounds are actually entering the ear and moving the sense-organs. It is not that the ear does not respond to the sounds, but that the senses are turned away from the sense-organs. So also, the eyes may be open while we are in a "brown study," and nothing is seen, though the retina contains the image of all things from which light-waves are proceeding to the eye. If the clock suddenly stops, the attention is at once attracted to inquire about the unexpected change; so also if a large cloud suddenly obscures the sun, or a fresh, damp wind strikes the nostrils or the skin. These things would not attract the senses if we were not maintaining within the mind at least a little consciousness of outward things and interest in them. The student must learn to ignore these outside things at will.

The practice is sometimes followed of withdrawing attention from the outer sounds and forms by listening to sounds and attending to lights and feelings within the body. Such sounds as are set up by the movement of air in the ear and other cavities, or by the circulation of the blood, or by other bodily phenomena, are unnoticed in the grosser sounds of life when we are attending to common affairs, but when we sit down silent and inattentive to outer impacts these more delicate impressions may be found in consciousness. These may be chosen as objects of concentration, and when they have displaced the outer sounds they may themselves be forgotten while the entire attention is being given to the object of concentration.

It is a difficult matter to turn the senses away from the sense-organs. Sit quietly and listen intently to the ticking of the clock. Then try not to hear it, first by an effort not to do so, and then by intent attention to something else. Again, try deliberately to confuse the sound by mixing it with others produced by your imagination, and in the confusion lose sight of the original sound.

The best way to rid oneself of such interruptions is to select a place where as little interruption as possible can come, and then remove from the mind all expectancy or interest in outside changes. Consider, before beginning your practice of concentration, whether any physical phenomena concern you for the time being. Do you expect anyone to call you or interrupt you? Do you fear that someone may surprise you in what may seem to the ignorant a ridiculous occupation? Even if you do, it is better to avoid expectancy. Do not be constantly on the listen for someone's coming. All such expectancy keeps the senses vividly attentive to the slightest sound. In short, resolve that during the time of practice anything that may occur in the outer world does not concern you in the least, and that you will pay positively no attention to external matters. If there is an unusual sound, cease to wonder what was the cause of it or what it means. Cease to take interest in outward changes and they will soon drop out of consciousness. If you have willed to be successful, you will not mind about outward things, or give an instant's thought to what foolish people may do or say.

CHAPTER VII

THE REMOVAL OF INTRUDING THOUGHTS

TROUBLE FROM ONESELF

SOMETIMES when we are engaged in study or writing a visitor arrives; he may be a welcome friend at any other time, but at the moment he is a trouble. So also when we are engaged in an attempt at concentration, "visitors" throng in upon us; some welcome and others unwelcome. What is it that brings them here so inopportunately, and by what means can we persuade them to take their leave?

A little study of these intruding thoughts will show that they are mostly concerned with considerations of self, and are linked to some emotion and memory in the mind. There is always a tendency for us to regard the things and persons that we meet in the light of how they affect our own lives. As long as this is so, feelings about them will invade our minds when we least require them, and these emotions in turn will awaken their corresponding trains of thought.

If Colonel Snuffamout is a jolly good fellow to all his companions at the club, he is none the less a rank bully to his hapless subordinates, and any thought of

him will arouse emotions of cordiality in the one case and of resentment in the other. If I take a walk across the sands, I find the moving particles an insecure and disagreeable foothold ; but doubtless the camel finds them indeed pleasant to the hoof. It is so with all the events of life ; each thing has its agreeable and its disagreeable aspects, and the latter will end for you only when we have learned to use them all to further the purpose that we have chosen.

As long as you choose to regard other men and the events of life solely as they concern your own daily life and feelings, your mind will be swept hither and thither by the winds that blow from everywhere. The mind will be full of memories and anticipations which habitually suggest emotions of anxiety, regret or resentment. These suggestions may be for the most part latent when you are engrossed in some physical work, or some mental activity which is kept to the point by having a physical basis, such as study or reading from books, or thinking in the course of conversation with others. But as soon as you turn away from active pursuits or study to engage in concentration, especially when no visible image or form is employed, you feel this persistent press of thought, which is then very unwelcome.

It is therefore desirable that you should weaken and destroy these associations, which are so fruitful of mental and emotional agitation, by constantly regarding other people and things not as appendages to your own personal life, as providing you with occasions for resentment or self-gratulation, but rather as working

out a destiny of their own, in which you can help them or hinder them, as you will. In practice this means that you should form the habit of considering another man's actions, motives, words or conduct, not as they affect your own life and whatever *you* may be interested in, but as they affect his life and interests. In regarding him in this way you will be using him for your own perfecting also; for the unity of human life is such that each gains by doing good to others. But if you use him for outward gain you disobey the Great Law, your affections are against it, and resentment and discontent will eat away your strength and peace.

This unselfish mode of life prevents the accumulation of personal thoughts, and certainly concentration cannot be fully accomplished unless it is seriously undertaken. The states of mind during concentration and during the rest of the day react upon each other, and if you can thus to a large extent eliminate anxiety, greed, envy, jealousy, anger, fear, pride and irritability from your daily life, it will be so much the better for your concentration.

ONE-POINTED PURPOSE

If you have already said: "I will," all this will be done, and your concentration will not be disturbed by such thoughts and feelings as these, which constitute the major part of the intruding thoughts that populate the spaces around you. If you have said: "I will," you cannot even wish that certain thoughts should not

intrude ; if you find yourself wishing at any time you will know that you have not yet really willed.

Proceed then to sort out the facts of your life. Decide (1) what is your principal purpose in life, (2) what subordinate purposes are necessitated by duty, legitimate enjoyment and amusement, and weakness, or by inclinations which you do not feel strong enough to subdue at present, (3) what things are in your power and to what extent they are so, and what are quite out of your power, (4) how those things that are in your power may be altered to suit your purpose, and how the other things also may be employed when they come your way. The first should be your one aim during the time dedicated to concentration of mind ; the second constitutes the major portion of your everyday life ; the third should help you to carry out the other two calmly and sanely, so that you will not on the one hand strain at a weight which is beyond your strength, or on the other hand be depressed by obstacles which you are really able either to overcome or to circumvent.

Sit down in the morning and consider what things you are likely to meet with during the day, and of each one ask yourself the questions : " Does it serve my principal purpose ? Does it belong to my subordinate purposes ? How far is it in my power for alteration or for use ? What use can I make of it ? " And when the day is done go over the same list again, and ask yourself of each item : " Have I made use of this for my principal purpose or a subordinate one ? How far was it in my power ? What use did I make of it ? "

If you are much troubled by these intruding thoughts, when you are sitting down to begin your daily practice ask yourself the question : "What am I about to do ?" And answer point by point : "I am going to do so-and-so. Then I am going to do so-and-so." Then ask : "Why am I about to do so-and-so ?" And answer : "For such-and-such a purpose." Secondly think : "What is the business of my everyday life ?" Look over it briefly, and then clearly formulate the idea : "I have no concern with it during my period of concentration." Finally think : "What thoughts are likely to disturb me during this period ? Mr. Ponsonby spoke ill of me ; my son disobeyed me ; my father misunderstood me ; I lost some money ; somebody robbed me ; I fear that I shall lose my appointment ; I want to have a smoke or a drink or to chew something ; I wish it wasn't so hot or so cold ; I wonder if I shall gain such-and-such a thing ; how can I let my superior officer become aware of my many virtues ? I wish my wife or my child were not ailing ; Oh, when shall I succeed ? I wonder if I am making progress ; I wish these flies wouldn't bother me ; or, in short, why did God make things as they are, and why doesn't He carry out the improvements I have to suggest ?"

Let them all come forward in review. Do not aggravate them by a hasty and angry rebuff, but say to each in turn, quietly : "Good morning, sir, I hope you are well. No doubt your business is very pressing. I shall attend to it seriously and fully during the day, and endeavor to give you the most complete satisfaction ; but for the next hour I am otherwise engaged.

Good morning." Treated thus politely, the visitors will feel constrained to bow themselves out in silence. They will feel that you have made room for them in ordering your life, and, on the small pension of thought that you accord them during the day, they will live peaceably until they die.

The intruding thoughts of this class which come to disturb you during your efforts at concentration are due to your keeping open ends of emotion and thought ; if then any such intruder still persists in coming in, pause to give it a moment's consideration.

Say to it: "Come, don't interrupt me now. I will attend to you at five o'clock this afternoon," and keep the appointment, and think it *out*. Consider whether it has to do with a matter which is in your power or not. If it is in your power, decide to do something to settle it. If you have done all that you can, or if it is not in your power to settle the matter, decide finally that it has no concern with you and that you will think of it no more.

TELEPATHIC INTRUDERS

There is another class of intruders, which appear to come telepathically from other minds and from the objects arounds us. In these days of radio communications there need be no difficulty in believing that thoughts coming from other minds influence ours ; and that our own habitual thoughts hang about us when we are busily engaged, and discharge themselves upon us in our moments of quiet is a matter of common

experience. It is no wonder that the mind, subject to such bombardment, tosses like a boat in a storm, and that it should seem to the practiser at first that the more he strives to control the mind the more it plunges.

In many cases intruders of this second class do not excite particular personal emotions. Words, numbers, pictures, ideas, intelligible or unintelligible, come drifting before the mind; and often they have no connection with the incidents, purposes or emotions that govern our daily lives. They come from the things round about us, and from other persons. If the concentration is active and the mind kept vigorously working, these drifting thoughts will come and go, and though they may be seen floating past, they will not be anchored to the attention. If you find that any such drifting thought becomes insistent and persistent, you will also find that you are taking a personal interest in it, and some impatience, irritation, disappointment or anxiety has arisen. In this case the drifting thought has found a relative sleeping in your mind and has awakened it into activity. It should then be treated as an intruder of the first class. You should become so calm mentally that, while your attention is bent upon one thing, you can merely notice the pictures drifting past without paying any attention to them. Later on, after you gain by practice the required calm and concentration, it will be worth while to examine such pictures in detail; but at the present stage any effort to do so would only divert your attention.

If at first you do not feel that you can remain entirely indifferent to these drifting thoughts, you may

reduce them by the following and similar external devices: Keep for the practice a room which is used for no other purpose. Keep it clean yourself; do not send servants in to handle things. Gradually the room will become a haven into which you may retreat for shelter from the storms of life. Sit in the middle of the room, and place before you a picture or an image or a symbol (if you have no objection to such forms) of any being whom you worship, such as a picture of Christ or of Shri Krishna, or, if you choose, of any great man, living or dead, whom you wish to grow like. Sit with your back to the window, leaving your ordinary clothes outside. Put on a special garment, preferably not of wool, before going into the room. Do not take into the room money, pocket-knife or keys. Keep a special watch or little clock, pencil and paper there. Money specially is psychically unclean, therefore leave it outside. If it is not too cold let the feet be bare and well washed before you enter. It is best also to sluice the body and limbs with cool water. All this will keep you from immediate contact with emanations from objects which have been much handled by other people, or used in the business of life, and will also form a wall against drifting thoughts. Do not talk to anybody about what you are doing. Secrecy, or rather silence, is of positive value in all these practices. If people are thinking about what you are doing, their thoughts will tend to come in and disturb you.

But nearly all of this is quite unnecessary, and absolutely so if you have really said: "I will," though

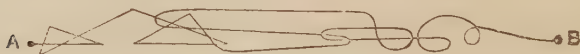
at all times and in all cases you will do well to preserve scrupulous cleanliness and a considerable amount of silence.

CHAPTER VIII

GYMNASTICS OF CONCENTRATION

DIRECT AND INDIRECT THINKING

IN our practice of recall we have sent the fish of attention swimming round and round a selected idea. Before it was trained in that way you used probably to let it wander from one thing to another without any very clear-cut purpose. Whenever you wanted to think out a problem or a plan of any kind, perhaps it went through a course something like this, in passing from the problem, A, to the conclusion, B, if indeed it ever arrived there at all :



This is indeed a most common variety of so-called thinking. As an example of it let us listen for a moment to the words of Mrs. Nickleby on the subject of Stratford-on-Avon, as depicted by the immortal Dickens :

“I think there must be something in the place, for soon after I was married, I went to Stratford with my poor dear Mr. Nickleby, in a post-chaise from Birmingham—was it a post-chaise though? Yes, it

must have been a post-chaise, because I recollect remarking at the time that the driver had a green shade over his left eye;—in a post-chaise from Birmingham, and after we had seen Shakespeare's tomb and birthplace we went back to the inn there, where we slept that night, and I recollect that all night long I dreamt of nothing but a black gentleman, at full length, in plaster-of-Paris, with a lay-down collar tied with two tassels, leaning against a post and thinking; and when I woke in the morning and described him to Mr. Nickleby, he said it was Shakespeare just as he had been when he was alive, which was very curious indeed. Stratford—Stratford. Yes, I am positive about that, because I recollect I was in the family way with my son Nicholas at the time, and I had been very much frightened by an Italian image boy that very morning. In fact, it was quite a mercy, ma'am, that my son didn't turn out to be a Shakespeare, and what a dreadful thing that would have been!"

And this was one of her memories about dining:

"It's very odd now, what can have put that in my head! I recollect dining once at Mrs. Bevan's, in that broad street round the corner by the coachmaker's where the tipsy man fell through the cellar flap of an empty house nearly a week before the quarter-day, and wasn't found till the new tenant went in—and we had roast pig there. It must be that, I think, that reminds me of it, especially as there was a little bird in the room that would keep on singing all the time of dinner—at least, not a little bird, for it was a parrot, and he didn't sing exactly, for he talked and swore dreadfully; but I think it must be that. Indeed I am sure it must."

Do you still find yourself in this condition, or have you succeeded in training the mind so that it will keep to the point you have decided to think about, and will go by the most direct road. If you have been

successful with the exercises so far prescribed you will be able to make the fish go in a comparatively straight line from A to B. The following exercises will all help to increase your power of concentration, and will at the same time open up the mind in a variety of ways.

EXERCISES IN SEQUENCE

Exercise 4. Sixth week. Sit down in your room and look round it carefully, noting all the little things which it contains. Now close your eyes and make all those things go before your mind in imagination, till the entire procession has passed by. If you know an alphabet of foreign forms, such as the Devanāgarī, the Arabic or the Russian, make the letters pass one by one in procession before your imagination until the whole series is complete. If a break occurs in the series, begin again.

Exercise 5. Seventh week. Sit down once more, and take a walk, in imagination, along a familiar road or street, noticing all the details that you can remember as you slowly pass them by ; return by the same route. Take a new walk in this way every day for a week, and every time that the little fish wanders from the path that you have chosen for your walk make it come back and begin the walk over again from the very beginning. Thus you train it to follow a line or series of definite images not chosen by itself.

Exercise 6. Eighth week. This time, instead of passing along a familiar street or lane, pass in imagination through some previous experience that you have

had. Suppose, for example, you have risen one morning, taken breakfast, driven to the station, conversed with Mr. Brown in the train that took you up to town, arrived at your office, read your morning correspondence, and so forth, through all the general incidents of the daily round. Try to live it over again as perfectly as possible, and, as regards at least one small portion, even in detail. If the little fish wanders away, bring it back, and make it begin again at the beginning.

Exercise 7. Ninth week. Next proceed to a third stage in this practice, in which you try to keep your thinking in a fixed line of activity. Decide upon some particular sight or sound that is before you, say the ticking of the clock. Ask yourself what is the cause of that. It is due to the swinging of the pendulum and the movements of the spring and wheels. But what causes all these? Try to run back along a series of images, following the clock back in its wanderings; see how it was placed in position, how it travelled to where it is, where it came from, how its parts were put together and made, where and by whom, how its materials were procured, in fact, imagining all that has contributed to make it what it is. It does not matter very much whether your imaginings in this practice are right or wrong, but it does matter that your mind should run through a long series of coherent imaginings without once missing the point. Each day follow in imagination the course of life of something about you, without once letting the fish wander away to other things.

EXERCISES IN GRASP

Exercise 8. Tenth week. Go out for a walk in imagination, as you did before, along some familiar way, but on coming to a selected building or scene, stop dead and examine it. Try to picture it in all its details without wandering away or going on. This is distinctly a difficult thing to do just at first, and if you find that the mind begins to tug violently in its efforts to get away, move about into different positions every few moments and try to picture the scene from these different points of view ; but as soon as you are tired return to where you are. You will probably find that you know very little of the details of the buildings or the scenes with which you thought yourself quite familiar. In this exercise dwell with perfect gentleness upon the scene you are trying to recall, as though you were trying to remember a fading dream. It is not success in recalling that is the important thing in these exercises, but the development of the mind that comes from trying.

Exercise 9. Eleventh and twelfth weeks. Look carefully at the wall of the room in which you sit ; notice everything about it, the objects that are fixed upon it or are standing against it, the form, size and proportions of everything connected with it. Now shut your eyes and try to picture the whole at once. You will find the image hazy and indefinite. Imagine then various small parts of it in turn, and you will see how much clearer these are. Again, picture to yourself the figure of a man. You will probably find it

rather indefinite, but when you look at one small portion of the image that part will become clear while the rest will tend to disappear. If you make the hands or feet clear, the head has vanished; if you make the head clear, the lower part of the body will have gone. Whatever may be the image that you examine in this manner, some part of it will elude you, and when you look at one portion the others will grow faint or even disappear. Practise, therefore, for two weeks the following method of mind-painting.

Take a picture of a great and good man whom you sincerely admire; place it before you, and examine a small portion of the face, say an eye. Close your eyes and think of that portion; repeat this several times, until you can at once form it clearly. Now take another part near to the first—say the other eye—and fix that also firmly in the imagination. Next recall the first eye and make an image of the two together. Now deal with the nose in the same way, separately, and then picture together the two eyes and the nose. Compare your image with the original every time; and so go on adding part after part until you have the whole of the face clearly in your mind and can picture it completely in detail without great effort. In one sitting you may succeed in reproducing only one or two features, and it will take the greater part of a fortnight to complete a complete portrait. If you thus do one picture perfectly, you will find a great increase in the power of imagination.

Exercise 10. Thirteenth week. You may now turn with advantage to the practice of expanding the attention. Take up a picture of any pleasant scene. In India we have many delightful pictures of different forms of the Deity, which are much used for various meditative purposes. For example, there is a pleasant little picture of Shri Krishna, the Hindu Lord of Love, as a boy seated on a rock, playing a flute, while in the background the happy cows graze on the bank of a peaceful river, beyond which a range of tree-clad hills protectively encloses the gentle scene.

Take such a picture as this; examine it carefully; close your eyes and reproduce it in imagination. Now begin to narrow down the view, and observe how much clearer the scene becomes as you diminish its extent. First drop the clouds and the mountains in the background, then the trees and the river and the cows which are grazing by it, and so on little by little, until you have nothing left but the form of the boy. Go on slowly in the same way, making the image clearer and clearer as it grows smaller, until you have lost the rock and have left only the upper part of the body, the head and the face.

Hold that image for a moment, and then begin to expand it again, trying to keep the whole as clear as the small piece to which you had contracted it, and as you build up the entire picture again, point by point, make every effort to retain for the complex unit the definiteness which you were able to secure in one small portion of it.

EXERCISES IN SELF-EXPANSION

Exercise 11. Fourteenth week. Place some pleasant and familiar object such as a small statue in front of you, two or three feet away from where you are sitting, preferably in the middle of the room. After examining it, close your eyes and imagine it clearly from the position where you are, as you would look at it. Now imagine it from the back, not by turning it round in your imagination, but by transferring your idea of yourself to a point on the opposite wall. Imagine yourself not to be sitting where you are, but against the opposite wall, looking at the object from the opposite side. Once more form a picture, this time of what we should usually call the back of the object. When you have both images well made, from the front and the back, try to imagine them together, as though you were looking at the object from both sides at once. To do this effectively you will need to get rid of the idea that you are facing the object from one point of view, and imagine yourself as on both sides of it, regarding it from both directions at once.

Now take up the same object for a further practice. Imagine yourself to be looking down upon it from above. For this purpose, transfer your consciousness into the ceiling. Then bring your consciousness down, and go carefully and slowly round the object at a little distance, observing it from every point of view. Next get your consciousness down into the floor and observe the thing from underneath. And finally, by going through all these circumambulations of

consciousness one after another with increasing rapidity, try to blend all the images that you have gained from the different points of view, and grasp the thing as it really appears without reference to your position with regard to it.

This is, of course, a difficult thing to do; but remember in these exercises one is not expected to do the thing perfectly, but only to *try*.

Exercise 12. Fifteenth week. Take up now a simple object, such as a box of matches. Examine it; open it and inspect the interior carefully; place it before you; close your eyes and imagine it from every point of view. Now imagine the interior also, and try to hold all these ideas or images of the object at the same time in your consciousness. Transfer your consciousness into the middle of it, and look at it from that point. Then expand your consciousness gradually until you are no longer a point in the middle of the object, but have become a large ball with the object in the middle of you.

Continue this practice for a week with different objects, such as a flower, a fruit, a cocoanut, a glass of water, your head and your heart.

EXERCISES IN MENTAL COMMAND

Exercise 13. Sixteenth week. You will by now have discovered that you are able to call up images far more easily than you could before, and that the mind no longer wanders away so wilfully as it used to do. The next step is to make a series of experiments in

calling up images bodily and complete before the mind. For this purpose you will probably find at first that repetition of the name of the object is necessary. Suppose that you have been using a picture, such as that of Shri Krishna, in one of the foregoing exercises. Now, with your eyes closed, look into empty space and mentally call out the name of Shri Krishna, repeating it again and again, and trying to discern the form. Suddenly it will spring up before your mental vision, and the complete picture will present itself in idea or in form.

You will find it a great help in making a mental picture to see that all the details within it are congruous with one another. For example, you might picture a cart drawn by two horses, but if you attempt to imagine it as being drawn by two kangaroos you will find the matter much more difficult. It is not possible to hold two disconnected images or ideas before the mind at the same time. But it is possible to grasp the two at once if the main focus of attention is something which includes both at the same time, or something common to both. I can picture a kangaroo and a horse together by centring the attention on their common characteristic and thinking of both as animals. I can picture a horse and a cart together because they occur together in common experience as a unit having a single purpose. But it would be comparatively difficult to hold together the ideas of a kangaroo and a cart. The mind would tend to run from one to the other, losing sight of each alternately. If, however, some common relationship

were discovered and made the centre of attention, the two ideas would readily cling together, instead of repelling each other by their incongruity. It is useful therefore to find the idea which makes the group really a unit, and make that the centre of the complex image. It is the abstract idea that binds the concrete images together.

Exercise 14. Seventeenth week. You should now make an effort to think in images, without the use of words. Endeavor to recall and know things without naming or describing them in words. Very often we feel that we do not know a thing until we have succeeded in recalling its name or verbal description, though its appearance and qualities may be quite familiar. Thinking in words is thinking in symbols, and in it there is much danger of missing the truth, for it is easily possible to manipulate and rearrange the symbols in a manner to which the facts would not conform. In dealing with the higher mystic perceptions and occult researches we shall often be without the aid of arbitrary symbolic words, and have to think in the realities themselves, so that thinking and experiencing will at last become indistinguishable.

As an elementary practice of this, let the following ideas form a succession of thought in form, without words: horse, cow, milk, moonlight, moon, sun. Picture a horse, trying not to think of the name of it. Now if you drop the picture and then call up the image of a cow, you will have to think the word "cow" between the two. This is the usual process in the chain of thought: name (horse), form (horse), name (horse),

name (cow), form (cow), name (cow), name (milk), form (milk), name (milk), and so on, the picture being blotchy. In this practice, however, the names must be left out, and the picture must undergo a continuous, gradual change in which there is constant modification of the form.

Having pictured the horse clearly, begin to modify it piecemeal. Let the contour of the back, the slope of the neck, the shape of the body, the form of the legs and hoofs, the tail, the setting of the head, and other details, gradually change from those of a horse to those of a cow until the transition is complete. Then proceed to concentrate the attention on the milk which comes from the cow, and gradually lose sight, of the cow's head, tail, body, legs and other parts, until only the stream of milk is seen. Make this now undergo a gradual change. Thin out the liquid stream, letting it lose its definite outline and opacity, but retaining the color, though making it paler, and to this nebulous stream add outline and surroundings until you have a stream of moonlight on dark water or a forest glade. Hold this before the attention for a moment. Trace the moonlight to the moon in the dark sky, adding this to the picture. Now drop the forest glade or the dark sea point by point and let your attention run up the ray of moonlight to the moon itself. Gradually change this form. Let its outline remain but expand, and its color change, until you have the great golden-red ball of the rising or the setting sun.

Perhaps you will think that all these practices of concentration involve too great an effort. It is not so.

Think of the efforts that you made as a child when learning to write, how long it took you to gain control of your hand and pen. That was a greater effort than this, for, however much the mind may seem to plunge about, remember it is made of far more yielding and plastic stuff than is your arm or hand, and is therefore easier to control. Indeed, if you will, it is easier to learn to control the mind than it is to learn to write. Think, again, of the vast number of exercises a violinist will practise to render his fingers supple, obedient and expert. Give the same, or far less, effort to mind-control and you will become master of your instrument. There should, of course, as said before, be no physical strain in all this work.

CONCENTRATION AND STUDY

I have already mentioned how concentration helps the memory; let me add here an explanation of the way in which it can be used by students. I want particularly to give a hint to those who are preparing for examinations.

Let us suppose that a student is going to read by himself several pages of a textbook on history or chemistry. There are perhaps five ideas which he must understand and make perfectly clear to himself. Well, he begins on the first page with idea number 1, gives to it the full power of his attention, and obtains a clear impression of it. Then he goes on to another page, to study his second idea; but he is a little anxious about idea number 1. He feels that he must

keep half an eye upon it lest it escape from his mind and be lost. He is not quite sure that he possesses that idea unless he can see it or feel it. The consequence is that he cannot give full attention to idea number 2. Therefore he does not grasp it as well as he did the first idea; it is less definite, and his anxiety is greater than before when he has to turn to idea number 3. Still less power of attention can he give to number 4, since he is anxious about number 1, very anxious about number 2, and very, very anxious about number 3. His knowledge of idea number 5 is likely to be vague in the extreme.

When he has finished his whole course of study his knowledge of the entire subject proves to be very unequal and mottled. Some few things are clear to him, others are hazy, others are invisible; and his success in the examination depends largely upon his luck with the questions. Further, his knowledge is not going to be of great use to him for deeper studies, when in its elementary parts it is so unequal.

This unfortunate student reminds me of the Irishman who, the story goes, was working on a farm, and was one day sent out into a yard to catch some little pigs. He ran after them and caught one by the tail. Holding on to that with his left hand he ran after another and caught it. Now holding on to two of them he ran after a third. It is not recorded how he finished the task. He ought, of course, to have caught one and locked it up, then another, and so on. That is what the student ought to do with his ideas. Let him fully understand idea number 1, and then lock it up by an

act of concentration. When he has made the idea clear to himself, let him lean back in his chair and look at it calmly and steadily for a quarter of a minute. He can now drop the subject while he turns to idea number 2, confident that number 1 will come up in his mind when he wants it. Thus he will be able to give the same full attention to number 2 that he first gave to number 1, and so on to number 5. Using this method of concentration, his knowledge will be equal, and he will not forget. There is nothing like anxiety to produce both forgetfulness and feeble-mindedness ; but the experience of the value of concentration in study soon produces confidence in its power, and grants a new lease of life to the fatigued and worried student.

It is also a great merit of concentration that it enables a student or worker not only to take up and retain a new idea, but also to drop one thing and turn to another. This ability to forget, to leave things alone mentally when it is not the proper time to think about them, is of inestimable value.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT MEDITATION IS

CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION

MEDITATION begins where concentration ends. The purpose of concentration is to focus the attention upon a small field of mental vision, so that the light of consciousness may be as brilliant as possible; it is analogous to the fixing of a reflector round a light, as, for example, in a searchlight. During such concentration our consciousness is therefore at its best as to quality and power.

Concentration involves contraction of the field of vision, but meditation involves its expansion. In concentration you gain clear vision; in meditation you keep that clear vision but extend it over a larger field and into depths and heights of thought which you have not been able to reach clearly before.

Even a small mind can often do one thing well; even the animal mind can bring one narrow virtue to a high degree of perfection, as in the case of the faithfulness of a dog; but what we require to develop is a large mind which can grasp a great deal at once and yet deal perfectly decisively with the whole. Thus we shall gain in time a powerful control over a large field of varied interests. It is well, however, not to attempt great expansion until the mind has a strong grasp of the little things or the few, which is to be gained by concentration.

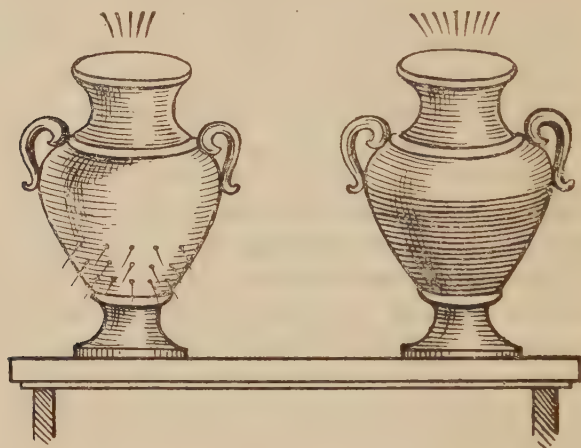
It may be said in a general way that the object of our being incarcerated in earthly bodies is to produce a kind of concentration. We are temporarily shut off from the light of other worlds, and from the myriads of things in this world to which our senses are not adapted, with the consequence that what little experience we do obtain through these limited senses is strong and clear. It is analogous to the distinct picture that is formed upon the plate or film of a camera, into which only a limited quantity and range of light is admitted. To open up great clairvoyant and other such powers in the ordinary man would not enrich his life, but would only fill it with worse confusion than it already has. Let him become master of himself in the small region where he is ruler, and then the time will be ripe for a more expanded life. The consciousness of the average man is diffused and indefinite; let him practise concentration so as to make it clear and strong, and then meditation, so as to

expand that clear strong consciousness over a larger field.

Success in meditation therefore implies success in concentration, and in those things which are necessary to that, namely, relaxation of the body, indifference for the time being to what is happening near at hand or far away, emotional calm, and gentleness of vision. The man concentrating, sitting perhaps in his chair, is practically asleep bodily, but his consciousness in the brain is more than ever wide awake. In meditation that wide-awake consciousness applies itself to the subject of thought. Meditation is the very opposite of going to sleep. It is a regular flow of thought about an object with regard to which one has no difficulty in concentration. It is not like mind-wandering, in which the chain of thought leads over the hills and far away ; it is not like worry, in which one arrives again and again at the same point, having travelled in a circle ; it is a botanical ramble in the elysian fields, where every flower contains the same sunlight created into form.

Meditation is a great act of self-creation. The vivid consciousness obtained in concentration is an open door into the earthly mind from the positive spirit within us. Sometimes in ignorance people seek in outward excitement the vividness of that real life, not knowing that the pleasures that they crave are nothing more than a temporary excitement of the body, the senses or the mind, not realising that all this is a sham from which the gilt must soon rub off, not the solid gold of real happiness and life.

The life that pours down in meditation is creative. Consider the following diagram :



The first jar represents the ordinary man; the three levels of the jar, the physical, emotional and mental sections of his personal constitution. Physically he is restless and distracted by everything that touches his senses; emotionally he has little self-control, and the most trifling event can destroy his balance for a considerable time; mentally, his life is almost without direction at all. The water pouring down from above represents the divine life, which is dissipated through the innumerable holes in the vessel.

The second figure shows the man of meditation. By concentration he closes up the holes, and the water, pouring into him in ever-increasing volume, fills up the vessel constantly higher and higher; and that divine life

does creative work up to the level which it has reached. Thus, the man in meditation may reach conceptions of beauty, or duty, or truth, or the grandeur of noble character, loftier than any he has obtained before. As he dwells upon them, they work into him in a creative way, so that afterwards he will be able to reach and hold the higher level with comparative ease.

Still, the object of meditation is not to bring something down into the lower self, for its satisfaction, but it is to take something up, to reach in your thought or feeling something that you have not touched before, and yet to carry up there the clearness of vision that was yours at the lower levels. You must take yourself up. The self that seeks only consolation for the troubles in life, or a pleasant emotional sensation of confidence in something higher than itself, may have and enjoy its own meagre delights in an inferior sort of meditation that is hardly worthy of the name. Grateful and comfortable, he of this meditation is like a cat purring in a person's arms, enjoying the luxury of attention from a superior being. But meditation proper is for him who would ride through the world in a triumphant chariot of the soul's glory, for him who would expand his heart with love till it glows like the sun in all climes and places, for him whose eye would behold in a perpetual ecstasy of comprehension the all-comprising miracle of existence large and small. For such things the little self must let go its pleasures, which have no parity with the real happiness of true life.

MEDITATION AND EXPERIENCE

Meditation is one pole of our existence, which is all creative. Not by meditation alone will anyone reach to the greatest heights ; the limitations of external life contain the divine teaching in equal measure. To look within and to seek without are the winter and the summer, the day and the night, the left and the right foot of the soul's progress. Just as one who understands may be as thrilled with the beauty of a tiny leaf as with the grandeur of a tropical forest, so may one know that the divine finger is just as much in the small experience that comes to you and me as it is in the great occurrences which make landmarks in history. Our life sways between the inner and the outer poles. Inward thought devises a machine or propounds a theory ; outward experience suggests improvements to that mechanism, or declares the theory true or false. Consistency with the great laws of nature in their multifarious interplay, in other words unity with the archetypes, alone makes the thing useful or the theory true. We touch God at both poles. It was said that there is no bar or wall in the human soul where God the cause leaves off and man the effect begins ; so it may be said that there is no point or place in space where our hand does not meet with His.

Meditation, therefore, is most effectual when its thoughts and emotions are carried out of the chamber into the affairs of life, there to receive correction and modification, there to have attached to them points of

experience that will give them new bloom and add to them sister blossoms in future meditations.

PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

There are certain preliminary practices which are a great aid to meditation. First there is the simple method of sparing a little time each morning or evening to turning over in the mind the events of the day, and thinking about them in a gentle manner. This is a great rest and recreation for mind, emotions and body; it purifies and refines our lives, and ploughs and harrows the field, preparing it for inspiration and intuition.

Secondly, the reading that most of us do can also be made an opportunity for the development of mental power. Its effect is very often quite the reverse, for there is scarcely anything more destructive of mind organisation and the power of thought than the habit of promiscuous reading without purpose and without afterthought or forethought. If you know any people who cannot read or seldom read, you may have observed that the *condition* of their minds is usually superior to that of reading people. What they know they know well; their ideas are vivid, and available when they want them—but we must offset against this advantage a great paucity of mental content. There is no reason why we should not have perfect clearness and vigor of mind along with ample knowledge; and indeed this can be brought about by reading in the right manner. We shall perhaps read a little less than we did before, but we shall read *well*.

For this purpose I recommend the advice of Emerson : "Read for correction, not for information." In other words, think first and read afterwards. Some few people read first and think afterwards, which is a good thing, though not the best, but I am afraid that most people just read and do not think at all. The rare people who are really going to profit by their reading are those who think first and read afterwards. If you have half an hour for reading, spend ten minutes in reviewing your own knowledge and thought on the subject—even if you think you have none you may engage in wondering about it—and then read for twenty minutes. Or, if you have only a quarter of an hour to spare, think for five minutes and read for ten.

It means that when you pick up your book to read, let us say, a chapter on the habits of tree-frogs, you will not immediately open the book and plunge into the subject. You will first sit with the book unopened on your knee or on the table, and say to yourself : "Now, just what do I know about the habits of tree-frogs?" It may be much or little or next to nothing that you know, but whatever it is you must make yourself review your own knowledge before you start to add to it. Then you may open your book and begin to read, and the result will be that you will understand more than usual ; and you will remember more than usual, indeed, nearly all, of what you read.

Your mind has been awakened to the subject ; its own knowledge has been rearranged in an orderly form, and many questions, definite and indefinite, have come into view. The expectancy engendered by thinking

before reading provides the mind with hooks to take up many points which otherwise would be scarcely noticed, and the arrangement of your old knowledge offers a place into which each piece of new knowledge will fit.

This practice puts the mental house in order, opens up and tidies the most unused drawers and boxes, and prepares the mind for light, as no other kind of reading can. First of all you have ideas of your own—then you correct, enlarge and increase them by reading. You gain not only knowledge and a well-ordered mind, but also exercise that results in power of mind and will.

This mode of reading has also another great merit ; it prepares one for a fruitful old age. Every one who wants to keep his mental powers unimpaired after the decline of the physical senses should have a mental hobby, and give a little time to it from three to five days each week—not every day, for that tends to fatigue. It is best always to have on hand a good book, on philosophy, or history, or travel, or science, or any other subject, to which one can turn several times a week for mental recreation. There should be no thought of reaching the end of the book ; it is just there for use. And the method of reading it should be that in which one thinks first and reads afterwards.

I recommend every young man or woman when leaving college or high school to keep up one of his subjects of study as a mental hobby, or to take up some other subject in which he is interested. It does not matter what the subject is—a branch of mathematics, history, biology, geology, psychology, moral philosophy, economics, political science, astronomy,

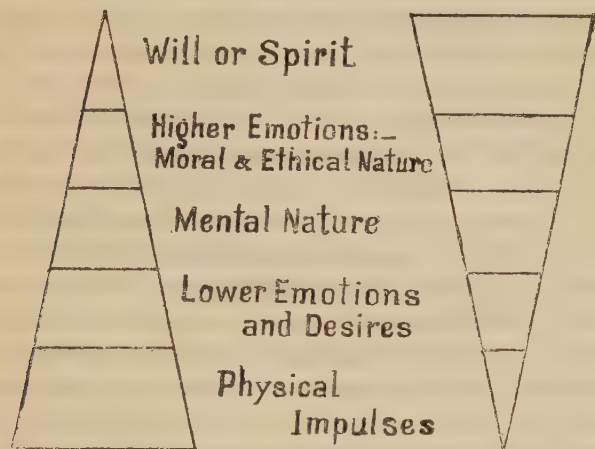
chemistry, religion, art; any one of these, or any branch of one of them.

The most important fact in connection with this study is that the student will be using his mind under the control of the will, that is to say, by determination from within, not merely in response to the stimulus of everyday events and needs, as is the case when we think about most of the affairs of life. If a man has been thinking only in response to external stimulus, it is almost certain that when the physical powers of hearing, sight, etc., begin to decline and external things have not the same claim on attention as they had before, and curiosity begins to disappear, mental activity will also diminish. But when a man has used his mind from within, has accustomed it to work under the impulse of his own will, there is no reason why his mental powers should not continue to improve even into advanced old age of the body—and that is what generally happens in such cases, in fact. There are, however, still other benefits resulting from the possession of a mental hobby. You have sooner or later the satisfaction of feeling that you are the *master* of some line of thought or subject of human knowledge, you know as much as anyone does about it. This gives you caste and confidence and you feel also the strength and the indescribable happiness of the inner sense of will.

MEDITATION AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

The following diagram is intended to give a rough idea of the changes which occur in man in the course

of his development. The first figure indicates the condition of an undeveloped man, the second that of one very advanced ; other people lie between the two :



Since meditation involves a gradual passage from the perception of the grosser to that of the finer qualities of things, without losing the warmth, vividness and definiteness or, in short, the vigor, of outer experience, the key to success at every step of the practice may be stated in a few words: Obstruct the lower activities while maintaining the full flow of conscious energy. Attention must be withdrawn from the physical body so that it is no longer an end in itself, but is only interesting as a beautiful and useful instrument for the purposes of the higher self. Next the personal desires and lower emotions must be set aside. The mind must be made vigorous and alert, then its lower activities must be obstructed, while the impetus

gained is used to exercise and develop the higher faculties.

In early stages of human growth desires are few. The savage accepts the comforts that nature gives, and only occasionally stirs his body into great activity for the satisfaction of desires. He is ruled by the immediate surroundings of his body. But a little later we find that life has become more complex ; the desire-nature has considerably awakened, and, seeking to gratify desire more and more, men have multiplied life's activities to a great extent. It is the man's desire that is the strongest thing in him—immediate physical ease must take second place. Desire causes him to select one of the many lines of action that are possible at a given moment. At this stage the mind, so far as it is developed, works only as a servant of desire, planning for its fulfilment in action.

But in the course of development the mind grows until it becomes the higher authority and begins to select among desires. Desires and emotions multiply to such an extent that a conflict arises among them, as they cannot all be satisfied at once. Then each prefers its claim before the intellect, and by thought a man begins to select the desires that are desirable and separate them from the desires that are undesirable, and to say to himself: "I will allow myself to desire this, not that."

We may carry the argument a step further, and declare that when the processes of the thinking mind are controlled by the ethical nature and the active will, a man will find himself in a new state of consciousness

which governs ordinary thinking, just as thought transcends and selects among desires. Such a superior state of consciousness cannot be described in terms of the lower mind, though its effects are seen in inspiration, intuition and conscience. Its attainment means that the man is conscious that he is something above mind and thought, even while mental activity is going on, just as a cultured man may recognise that he is something above and beyond his body, even while he is walking down the street.

Let us pause to notice the activities of mind that are to be transcended, so that intuition may come in from the higher principles in us. They constitute that which within us engages itself in observing, perceiving, classifying, associating and reasoning. The mind distinguishes the differences between things; it finds out their common characteristics and classifies them; it infers the relationships between them and argues from the seen to the unseen, from the present to the past and the future; it realises objects as things known by itself and associated with it, affecting it and being affected by it. Its general purpose in earlier stages is to decide in what manner action can best be carried out for the fulfilment of desires, and to get to know about things for this purpose; in the middle stage it selects among the desires themselves; but later on it will be engaged in finding the means by which the behests of the ethical nature and the spiritual will can best be put into effect in the outer world.

Let us distinguish clearly between modes of knowing and knowledge itself. Language is a mode of knowing.

When we have formulated facts in satisfactory words it is our habit to believe that we then know those facts. But words are only a lower vehicle of knowledge, a substitute for facts, like the terms in algebra ; at best they only suggest ideas, they cannot replace them and they must be transcended as we approach closer to a real knowledge of the relations between things. All the forms that we see and that we can visualise are only an imperfect mode of knowledge, and they also will be transcended in due course. This does not mean, however, that intuitional knowledge is less definite than what is embodied in words ; though it might seem so to one who approaches it by metaphysical argument, it certainly does not appear so to one who reaches it directly by the practice of meditation.

It is not difficult to give reasons why the lower mind must sooner or later yield its place of authority in human life to a higher intuition. Here are several :

(1) Carefully analyse the analytical faculty of mind. How do we observe things ? By comparison ; by noting points of similarity and of difference. But to distinguish one thing perfectly its comparison with all others is required ; and as this is true of all things, perfect perception sees them all to whatever it turns, and discrimination of the many things as different thus disappears. Analysis is analysed away.

(2) Again, in the current of events one thing is what and where and when it is because all things are so ; and since this is true of all things, particular causality disappears. We are indeed whirling through

space, mentally as well as physically, on a ball which has itself no foundation or support.

(3) The conception of the object of contemplation as something outside of me, which I am observing, is absurd. There is no line where "I" leaves off and "that" begins. The distinction between the subject and the object vanishes when we realise that these are only two ends of one stick, or that the "I" is the unchanging, unmodified witness of all the changes and modifications within itself.

There *is* another state of existence, or rather another form of life, beyond the mind, with its labored process of discernment of comparisons and causal relations between things. That higher state is only to be realised when the activities of consciousness are carried, in all their earthly fervor and vigor, beyond the grouping cave-life in which they normally dwell. That higher consciousness will come to all men sooner or later; and when it comes to any one of us all his life will suddenly appear changed. We shall no longer be staggered by the thought of eternal life in an ever-changing universe of time; we shall not now be appalled by the fearful possibility of eternal rest in changelessness; for these are but the conceptions of the little mind, applying its puny standards to the limitless glory of the life divine.

CHAPTER X

METHODS OF MEDITATION

MEDITATION AND CHARACTER

IF you now pass on from the practices of concentration to those of meditation, your object may be any of three. It may be to raise your consciousness to include normally more of the higher and subtler things, so that abstract thoughts and finer feelings may more fully occupy your mind. It may be to call down a blessing from higher spheres of life, or to rise in aspirational devotion into the presence of the divine. It may be to develop your character, and fix within it qualities which you intend to express, by striving to understand those qualities, dwelling upon them in thought, and picturing to yourself the manner in which they would affect your life if they were yours. Let us take the last first.

In the work of deliberate character-building there are two things to be taken into consideration. You must really understand what the qualities are that you want to build into your character, and you must then build them in. Vague efforts will not produce much

result. If men do not know what the dials of their watches look like, or what is the difference between running and walking, still less do they know what virtues and ideals really are. People think that they know these things, and sometimes they sit down to practise meditation, and begin to repeat to themselves words like: "Courage, courage, courage; truth, truth, truth, truth; kindness, kindness, kindness," but almost as well may one spring from the earth and expect to arrive in heaven. To know what these qualities really are and to build them into character one must meditate properly.

Ideals are the guiding stars of our life, virtues are the lamps for our feet. Ideals are the finished plan of our edifice; virtues are our working tools. We have to make our way across an uncharted sea, studded with a myriad rocks and islands, but far above and before us shines a great ideal—truth, goodness, beauty, harmony, freedom, unity, understanding—a galaxy of stars, one of which is especially the guide for each of us, as he steers his solitary barque. Seldom even in the darkest night are these stars not visible to us, but often their light is insufficient in our world to show the obstacles in our way. Here comes in the function of the virtues—the "strengths" of our character. They are our little lamps, lighted at our ideals, which we carry to find our way. Courage, kindness, devotion, determination and many another are these virtues, without which our movements would be like those of blind men on a dark night, whom neither light nor sight could profit.

MEDITATION ON A VIRTUE

Exercise 15. Eighteenth and nineteenth weeks. The way to meditate on a virtue is simple. First of all make a concrete picture of the virtue in action. If it is courage, make several pictures representing that quality—perhaps a soldier rescuing a wounded comrade under fire; an invalid in pain and wretchedness, but making little of his or her misery, so as not to convey it to others; a person bound to some duty that is drudgery, but carrying it through cheerfully; an artist or a poet who will not give up his love, regardless of the unkind face of fortune; a reformer whose talents might make him a shining light in politics were he to compromise, but he will not. Such pictures should you make, clear and living, concrete and detailed, solid as a drama on a stage, not flat like a picture on a wall.

Next build the quality into your own character by stepping up on to the stage, entering the body of the hero, acting and feeling and realising the scene as a living incident in your own life, and resolving to be that character henceforth. Select a different virtue every alternate day for two weeks, and give not less than fifteen minutes to this exercise.

Next practise *thinking* of the way in which the virtues work out in practical human life, somewhat in the following manner:

Exercise 16. Twentieth week. Sit down and think what harmlessness means. There must be harmlessness in act, so that none is injured; harmlessness in speech, so that no wounding word is spoken, so that no evil or

unkind reports are spread abroad, so that nothing is said about another which might prejudice opinion against him, or might be misconstrued against him, so that nothing is said which will lead another to act unwisely or misunderstand; harmlessness in thought, so that none may receive unkind or base impressions from the emanations of your mind, so that none will be inspired to error or wrong by your thought, so that you will not be led into harsh judgments or unkind criticism. How would you find this harmlessness expressed in the lives of great persons whom you admire, or in the actions, the thoughts and the words of the Master? How would you refrain from harmfulness if you were standing in His presence? How would this virtue affect your daily life, when you meet some person whom you have not liked, when you encounter some disagreeable incident, when someone stands in your way or tries to injure you, when things do not go as you think they ought to? How would you treat those whom you love if you had this virtue, so as not to rob them in any way of the freedom which love so often fears? Consider a different virtue each day for a week.

THE REMOVAL OF FAULTS

Allied to the practice of building virtues into character is another one that aims at the removal of distinct defects. It is not generally useful to dwell upon one's faults; remorse takes hold of the sinner, and makes him into a miserable sinner, a misery to

others as well as to himself. He who keeps his eye on what is good is likely to avoid the evil, and what there is of it in him will soon begin to drop away.

Still, there are sometimes particular distinct faults with which one can deal in a surgical manner. Suppose that you are liable to sudden anger, which is a bad thing even when there is what would commonly be called sufficient reason for it. Sit down and make a picture of some scene which has aroused or might arouse that anger. Picture the whole thing quite vividly—the cat upsetting the inkpot on the best tablecloth, your enemy speaking ill of you to someone whose opinion you value, or whatever it may be. Then make yourself act in that picture in exactly the opposite manner, sweetly and kindly, and resolve to live up to that standard should the occasion arise.

The method can be applied to all the emotions, for there is always a good one corresponding to each bad one. Thus fear may be replaced by admiration or gratitude, for if you have reason to fear anyone you have generally also some reason to admire him; from him you can learn something, can get something that you have not, and therefore there is occasion for gratitude. The lesson may be a painful one, but most of the pain will go out of it when it is taken in the right spirit. Similarly, the objectionable emotion of pride may be replaced by the good one of benevolence. All that you have to do in most cases to produce this transformation is to stop thinking about yourself and

to dwell instead upon the thought of how the world appears to the other person and what has caused him to act as he did. As every bad emotion springs from thought of self, so does thought upon the outlook of others give birth to the good emotions.

MEDITATION ON THE LAWS

It is worth while, too, to spare a little time to meditate quietly upon material and spiritual laws. There is, for example, the law of gravity. Knowing it, we should be fools indeed to jump downstairs instead of walking, or to attempt to cross a river on our feet. There are the laws of health, governing sleep and work and food and many other things, and here again we know that disobedience is foolishness, ruinous to health and happiness.

If there are laws for the body, so are there spiritual laws for the soul, of which the voice of conscience occasionally reminds us. Those spiritual laws are interested in the whole of our life's journey, not only the bit of it that we know in our present bodies. Yet they are in no wise contrary to material ones, because at last our physical life has a spiritual basis. Honesty and truth-speaking, for example, build up social relations that rest upon our confidence in one another and lead to co-operation and prosperity. Meditation on the spiritual laws can polarise all our thoughts and emotions into line with them, and make our most common daily contacts with others a spiritual voyage instead of a material battle.

DEVOTIONAL MEDITATION

If your temperament is that of a man of will or of intellect you will appreciate and profit by the above forms of meditation for the building of character, but if you are more of a devotee by nature you will find it easier to follow a devotional method. Instead of taking the qualities and deliberately building them into your own character, you will imagine them as in the possession of an ideal man or of the religious leader whom you worship, and then they will impress themselves upon you and become part of your own nature, for a man becomes like that upon which he dwells in thought.

Exercise 17. Twenty-first and twenty-second weeks. Select your ideal, the object of your worship, and take care when you do so that there is nothing in it that you in any way doubt or fear. Let it be one which you can fully trust and never question at all, for to besmirch the mind with a deity who needs glossing over, polishing or veneering, is to prostitute the loftiest human faculty, the power of worship, to the base uses of worldly hopes and fears.

When you have decided upon a suitable object, make an image of it before your mind, fix your attention upon it, and allow your thought to play upon it with an uninterrupted flow, so that as you dwell upon it from different aspects it constantly awakens your admiration. For example, the Deity figured as donor will call up gratitude, which should be allowed to well up within, unreservedly and unconditionally; as

creator, father, protector, king, his mystery and majesty will awaken glad awe, and trustfulness; as savior his compassion will excite self-sacrifice; as eternal sacrifice, his omnipresence will engender sympathy with all.

Knowing the value of this method, the Hindus have long lists of qualities, enumerating the virtues of the divine being. There is some danger, however, when so many forms are taken, of repeating mere words, without realising and feeling the effect of each one as fully as possible. Mere repetition of vaguely understood words and phrases will only produce a kind of mental and moral hypnotism. Ponder upon the quality as manifest in the form that is selected for meditation, and take the quality in all its aspects and relationships. At the outset a set of questions may be used to stimulate the thought, but when that is made clear, pondering and dwelling upon it, and viewing it in different lights are necessary. Such questions are: Why does the divine one possess and show this quality—let us say fearlessness? How? To whom? When? In what degree? In what manner? With what effect? A list of qualities can easily be extracted from any book of divine praise of any religion. One such quality is quite enough for several sittings.

I find the preparation for this process so beautifully drawn in an old Sanskrit book that I cannot refrain from offering a translation of the passage. By such a process of imagination a man may withdraw himself from the depressing suggestions of a dingy room,

wrapping himself first in a scene of beauty and peace, and then enjoying therein quiet meditation upon a beloved form.

“ Let him find in his heart a broad ocean of nectar,
Within it a beautiful island of gems,
Where the sands are bright golden and sprinkled
with jewels,
Fair trees line its shores with a myriad of blooms,
And within it rare bushes, trees, creepers and rushes,
On all sides shed fragrance most sweet to the
sense.

“ Who would taste of the sweetness of divine completeness
Should picture therein a most wonderful tree,
On whose far-spreading branches grow fruit of all
fancies—
The four mighty teachings that hold up the world.
There the fruit and the flowers know no death and
no sorrows,
While to them the bees hum and soft cuckoos sing.

“ Now, under the shadow of that peaceful arbor
A temple of rubies most radiant is seen.
And he who shall seek there will find on a seat rare,
His dearly Beloved enshrined therein,
Let him dwell with his mind, as his Teacher defines,
On that Divine Form, with His modes and His
signs.”

A Christian would generally select as his personal object the Christ amid the scenes of the gospel stories ; the Hindus have a variety of forms and incarnations of Shiva and Vishnu, and of the Devis Parvati, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

Among the Hindus it is customary to use very many symbols in meditation. For example, in a

certain meditation connected with the throat centre, the yogis think of the great Deva Sadāsiva; he is of a snow-white color, is clothed in a tiger's skin; has five faces with three eyes each, and has ten arms, each of which bears a symbol of power or exhibits a certain sign—a trident, a battle-axe, a sword, a thunderbolt, a snake, a bell, a goad, a noose, and a gesture of dispelling fear. This is only one of dozens of such symbols. I will give an account of one such form of symbolic meditation in a separate chapter.

It is possible also to meditate on music, which has symbolic and direct reality for the ear, though most people prefer a visible to an audible image in meditation.

INTELLECTUAL MEDITATION

In the intellectual form of meditation our purpose is to understand the chosen object as fully as possible. When this is done there is expansion without loss of strength or clarity. When a student is trying to prove a geometrical theorem, if he is wise he will first of all concentrate for a while on the data before him, will review his knowledge of them, will study the conditions of his problem. After that he will begin to think towards his solution. If he then finds that he cannot remember all his data at once, that he is constantly losing his facts and has to make an effort to collect them again, he may also note that it is next to impossible to solve his problem, and that if he does so it occurs more by accident than as the result of his successful work.

In that case he is trying to go too far without sufficient groundwork, and he should put aside his present quest and spend some time in the study of his facts, which were themselves conclusions a little while ago.

But if, on the other hand, he finds himself able to work his way steadily to his solution, he will probably also find that his data have become additionally clear as well. Expansion has not destroyed clarity in that case. It may be said that in all studies involving any grasp or depth of thought the aim of the student should be to make his conclusion as clear and real and familiar as his premises, so that he may later on use that conclusion as a simple and self-evident datum for his further or deeper investigation. All the time the student is engaged in making platforms for himself and then climbing on to them.

All thinking is really abstract thinking. It is one abstract idea that holds two or more concrete ones together. No one can really think of two quite separate things at once; if it appears to be so, they are parts of one bigger thought. You can think of one abstract or complex idea which contains two or more others. Thus, for example, to picture a pen and a hand separately would be difficult, but to picture a pen in the hand in the act of writing is very easy. That is because that has become one idea for us in the course of our experience. So the student should never try to grasp a variety of things at once; he will only distress himself and produce a kind of mental panic if he tries to do so. Let him always look for the abstract connecting ideas, which are really enveloping ideas.

We will now take a few exercises in the expansion of ideas and the grasping of abstract ideas.

Exercise 18. Twenty-third week. Sit down as usual and concentrate on a cat, bringing the subject fully forward by means of the four roads of thought. Then think of the cat in a wider significance, making your lines and forms go further than before, but still without losing perfectly clear sight of the cat. It is just as though, in the example of the elephant, you could think of the timber yards of Rangoon, then of the building of a new house in which you are using some of that timber, then of some trouble or delay in connection with that work, all without losing perfect vision on the elephant. Use a different subject each day.

Exercise 19. Twenty-fourth week. Once more take the cat as subject, and carry your thought inward and upward. Dwell first on the physical nature of the cat, then try to realise what its emotions are, then if possible its mental nature, and even its moral and spiritual condition, if such can be discerned.

Now we will take some more difficult practices which are bound to seem very unsatisfactory and almost impossible of accomplishment. They may nevertheless be expected to produce the faculty of inspiration—a deeper working of the higher part of man, which flows into action unexpectedly. It has often been noticed with regard to great scientific discoveries and inventions as well as to lofty philosophic and religious thoughts that they are due more to inspiration than to logical thinking. They are seldom the immediate result of a

deliberate chain of thought, and yet without that thought they would not have come. It is usually only when the lower mind has tried its best that the higher mind will help. Quite often an inventor or a scientist has puzzled over a problem for a long time and found no solution for it, until suddenly, perhaps some time after has set it aside as insoluble, the truth has flashed into his mind, illuminating the whole field of enquiry. That is inspiration. It is of the higher mind, while intuition proper touches the inner heart and tells of right and wrong, and conscience comes from the inner will.

Exercise 20. Twenty-fifth week. Select a difficult or abstract subject, such as the idea of harmony. Fix your thought upon it. Begin by asking questions about it. What is the selected idea? Name it. Think of some concrete examples of it, such as harmony in music and the harmonic motion of pendulums. See to what senses these examples apply. Go over them in detail and observe their qualities for sensation. What is the class of the idea? What are its prominent features? In what does it resemble and in what does it differ from other similar or contrasting ideas? What is its real nature and why does it exist? What part does it play in the succession of events? From what does it rise and to what does it lead?

When you have to some extent answered all these questions, picture the several concrete images together, trying to grasp their common element of harmony. Then try to hold this abstract thought of harmony, while you drop the concrete images.

Think of a number of colors; red, yellow, green, blue and violet. Notice that these are all distinct and quite different sensations. What do you see? You see red, yellow, green, blue and violet. But you do not see color, as such. Fix upon two colors, say red and green. Concentrate upon them. What have they in common? Certainly not much as regards their superficial appearance. There is, however, a relation between them, something which is common to them both. It is color. Try to understand what color is. Drop the images and the thought of red and green, and try to keep hold of the conception of color without them. Next fix the thought upon heat and cold. We are sensible of different degrees of warmth or coldness, but we have no direct sensation of heat as such. Try, out of these two ideas, to conceive of heat as such. Cling to the conception that you thus obtain while you drop the ideas of different degrees of heat. Again, color and heat are two forms of sensation. What is it that these have in common? The idea of sensation. Try to grasp this, while you drop the ideas of color and heat. In this practice it is not enough to define the things logically in words by their generic and differentiating marks. They must be pondered upon and looked into with a kind of mental feeling, and then an effort must be made to grasp and hold the abstract idea without any sense of form or of naming.

Exercise 21. Twenty-sixth week. Now take up for further practice a series of difficult questions, such as: What is truth? What is spirit? What is justice?

Avoid giving mere verbal definitions, but try to realise these things mentally. Take up any difficult passages in a book of deep thought or of mysticism. Follow reason in trying to elucidate them, and when you can reason no further, still do not let the thought wander away. Keep the thought there, at the highest point that you have been able to reach, and wait for the inspiration that will surely come.

CHAPTER XI

MANTRIC AND SYMBOLIC MEDITATION

THE MANTRA TO SHRI KRISHNA

THERE is another method of meditation widely spread in India, where a hundred million people daily offer their devotions to Shri Krishna, the Lord of Love. The devotee directs his mind to meditate upon Shri Krishna, the incarnate God, and through Him upon Shri Krishna, the Spirit of wisdom and love in the world. Very often you may hear him repeating again and again a sentence or chant, while he intently ponders upon its deep and varied meaning, and this chant, when repeated with true devotion, brings the devotee into daily touch with the great Lord, the officer of the source of life in our world, the messenger of the great Sun. It does not matter whether as a Hindu you worship with the name of Shri Krishna, or as a Christian you worship with the name of the Christ, or as a Buddhist with that of the Bodhisattva: your aspiration reaches the one great Being who focuses the devotion of the world. It is the spirit that matters.

Of all the mantras of Shri Krishna, none is more powerful than the five-divisioned, eighteen-syllabled

mantra given, it is said, by the Lord Himself to Brahmā, and so handed down into the world :

KLIM KRISHNĀYA, GOVINDĀYA, GOPĪ-JANA
VALLABHĀYA, SWĀHĀ !¹

Again and again the devotee repeats this mantra, and by it he attains to the path of Shri Krishna in this world. The following explanations are from the *Gopālatīpanī* and *Krishna Upanishads*.

“Once the Sages came to the great Brahmā and asked : Who is the Supreme God ? Whom does Death fear ? Through the knowledge of what does all become known ? What makes this world continue on its course ?

“He replied : Shri Krishna verily is the Supreme God. Death is afraid of Govinda (Shri Krishna). By knowing the Lord of Gopī-jana (Shri Krishna) the whole is known. By Swāhā the world goes on evolving.

“Then they questioned him again : Who is Krishna ? Who is Govinda ? Who is the Lord of Gopī-jana ? What is Swāhā ?

“He replied : Krishna is he who destroys all wrong. Govinda is the knower of all things, who, on earth, is known through the great teaching. The Lord of Gopī-jana is he who guides all conditioned beings. Swāhā is his power. He who meditates on these, repeats the mantra, and worships him, becomes immortal.

“Again they asked him : What is his form ? What is his mantra ? What is his worship ?

¹ Pronounce ī as ee; ā as in “father”; a as in “India”; o as in “go”; ri as between ri and ru, *i.e.*, vowel r.

“He replied: He who has the form of a protector of cows (the verses of the great teaching). The cloud-colored youth (the color of the fathomless deep). He who sits at the root of the tree (whose spreading branches are the creation and evolution of the age). He whose eyes are like the full-blown lotus (always resting in the pure lotus hearts of his devotees). He whose raiment is of the splendor of lightning (shining by its own light). He who is two-armed (the life and the form). He who is possessed of the sign of wisdom (with which the silent sages are initiated). He who wears a garland of flowers (the string of globes or planets). He who is seated on the centre of the golden lotus (at the heart of all). Who meditates upon him becomes free. His is the mantra of five parts. The first is *Klīm Krishnāya*. *Klīm* is the seed of attraction. The second is *Govindāya*. The third is *Gopi-jana*. The fourth is *Vallabhāya*. The fifth and last is *Swāhā*. *Klīm*—to *Krishna*—to the Giver of Knowledge—to the Lord of the Cowherds—*Swāhā*!

“Om. Adoration to the Universal Form, the Source of all Protection, the Goal of Life, the Ruler of the Universe, and the Universe itself.

“Om. Adoration to the Embodiment of Wisdom, the Supreme Delight, *Krishna*, the Lord of Cowherds! To the Giver of Knowledge, adoration!”

THE MEDITATION ON SHRI KRISHNA

If you would practise this form of meditation, sit quietly in your usual place and let your thoughts and feelings simmer down until your mind dwells peacefully upon the thought of the great Teacher of gods and men.

Think of all the conditions of success in life, kingship and wealth and worldly love and learning, and see how imperfect and dissatisfying all these are, and

how all the good in them is but a reflection in dull matter of His perfect knowledge and power and love. All earthly love is beset with misunderstandings ; all earthly knowledge is beset with error ; but in Him there is no misunderstanding, no impediment, no wrong.

Now imagine in your own heart a rose-bud or a lotus-bud. Let your mind look at it peacefully, as it droops upon its stem. Gradually, while you pronounce the word *Klēm* with intent, longing for the presence of the divine, raise up the flower now blossoming, and see, sitting on that twelve-petalled throne, the divine form of Shri Krishna, the cloud-colored youth with lotus eyes and the garland of the worlds, sitting at the root of the tree of life, his raiment shining with the splendor of lightning. And as you bow before him, saying *Krishnāya*, pour out your devotion to him. And as you say *Gorindāya*, see him raise his hand with the sign of wisdom in blessing. And as you repeat *Gopī-jana Vallabhāya*, let his power and love thrill in you and irradiate you. And as you utter *Swāhā*, throw out by your will all that force, so that the world may share. Repeat seven times the mantra of Shri Krishna, contemplating the Divine Form in the flower of your heart.

CHAPTER XII

OBSTACLES TO MEDITATION

THE THREE EFFORTS

IF you have resolved upon true success in life, that is to live and grow in accord with the Great Law, and if you have said: "I will," you will find sooner or later that you have done three things. The first of these was to turn your face in the right direction. The second was to keep it there. The third was to make an effort to go forward—not to hurry, but just to drive forward and not stop for anything.

Constantly, for some time to come, you will need to revise these three steps; to see that you are going the right way, to keep from deviating, and to drive on. Put in as much force as you can when you are sure that you are going in the right direction, not before. If you drive forward when you are off the track, you will do damage to yourself and others, and make obstacles for yourself in the future; but if you keep straight, the harder you drive the greater will be your success, and obstacles will steadily diminish.

In order to keep straight always remember that others also want the things which you seek. Let them have what they want. Never deprive another of that which you value for yourself, whether it be liberty or power, knowledge or learning, love or friendship ; so will you always follow the wheels of the Great Law. If you find yourself trying to gain power over others, seeking to surpass others in knowledge, or to attract the love or praise of others, you may know that you are dangerously off the track, that you must take especial care never to injure another by thought or word or act. Any breach of the law will be punished in some way, for there is no real greatness without goodness.

GIVE UP WISHING

Before you can pass on from meditation to contemplation you must be able to give up wishing and hoping entirely, at least during the period of practice. The mind can never be single while wishes occupy it. Every wish is also a seed from which may spring anger, untruthfulness, robbery, impurity, greed, carelessness, discontent, sloth, ignorance and resentment ; and while one wish or hope remains within you, all these violations of the Law are possible. Give up wishing and hoping ; say : " I will," and have faith ; stand out of your own light and let the Great Law work its will and way.

If only you can maintain this attitude there will be no obstacles in your meditation, but if you have it not they will constantly come in and spoil your work.

Every time that you sit down to think, these wishes, these unsatisfactions, will call you aside. There is a familiar saying that nature abhors a vacuum. Let us present it in a new form, saying that the human mind abhors a vacuum. The stream of thought is thus ever seeking to flow aside into little gullies and channels left open by unsatisfied desires and indecisive thought. Every little unsatisfied desire, every un-thought-out problem, will present a hungry mouth ever calling aside your attention; and inevitably in your meditation, when the train of thought meets with a difficulty, it will swing aside to attend to these calls. While those exist you will find the course of your meditation constantly interrupted by thoughts and desires which rise up from the recesses of your own mind. When you trace out these interrupting chains of thought you will find that they have their source in these unsatisfied desires and unsettled problems.

To clear away these obstructions it is little use trying to repress and suppress them. A better plan is to give them their due, appoint them a time and think them out. A mind that cannot overcome such vacillation as leaves its problems perpetually unsettled cannot succeed in meditation. A man for this purpose must decide to arbitrate his problems, abide by his own decisions and refuse to think the same matter over and over again. The ability to do this grows with practice and with the habit of putting decisions into action. Fill up all the chinks of thought and bend the little side-rills round so that they discharge themselves into the main stream. Think out every problem and

interruption in the light of its bearing and effect upon your main purpose. The development of a general philosophic mood which brings its experiences and faculties to a unity of understanding and purpose is essential for the successful pursuit of meditation. It is of great assistance also to know what type of man or woman you are, to what ray of life you belong—a matter which may be studied in my book, *The Seven Rays*.

With the devotee the interruptions rise mostly from desire. A lingering half-concealed longing will blossom into a train of emotion, thought prompted by desire, as soon as the stream of devotional emotion exhausts its impulse and the object ceases to present novelty and wonder, and the cup of delight seems empty. The desires must be settled, not by destruction of desire, but by being led, as they arise, into the main stream of emotional outpouring, and merged in the one overwhelming desire to feel the presence of the divine. The divine can be sought and found in any place and at any time, and when this is felt all disturbing fears, regrets and anxieties are swallowed up in the great delight of an ever-present opportunity to fulfil the most holy and all-embracing of desires.

THE NEED OF A TEACHER

Among these unsatisfactions, one that stands out very prominently in the thoughts of many aspirants to higher consciousness is the eagerness to find a teacher. It is the greatest encouragement to know that there

are those who have once been as ourselves, who have achieved greatness and entered the higher consciousness, and that they appear now and then to earnest seekers, and teach them the way. But if you use this blessed knowledge wrongly, as so many do, and fall into the constant habit of uneasy craving for assistance, you will find this to be one of the greatest obstacles to meditation.

It is surely right that in the midst of our self-reliance we should always recognise the necessity of a teacher. But remember that you always have a teacher at your side, though that teacher is not necessarily a man at first or at any time. Perhaps you have found a book that for the time inspires you ; let that be your teacher for the time being ; do not crave for a teacher while neglecting the teacher which is at your hand. The knowers of Yoga have ever asserted that at an advanced stage in the aspirant's progress, when he has used to the full all the general knowledge that he finds in books or obtains from those who know the beginnings of the art, then the great teacher will appear to him. He will not come before, because to do so would be an injury, not a benefit, to you. As it says in an ancient Scripture : " Learn with reverence, with searching thought and with service ; then the wise ones who know the truth will appear and teach you the wisdom." But do not forget that the teacher is at your hand every moment, and will speak with you when you choose to prefer him to the things of confusion which at present you seek to grasp, to know and to fondle.

MEDITATE WITHIN YOURSELF

Yet another serious obstacle is the craving for some special method of meditation, and an eagerness to know whether to meditate in the heart, in the head, in the little finger, or in some other place. Do not trouble about these things at all, unless they are prescribed for you by a competent teacher ; but meditate right down inside yourself. Go deep enough to forget your body for the time being ; for remember the whole purpose of meditation is first to modify yourself, to alter your own shape of mind, and then to grow on the new axes that you have thus formed. First make your shape, and then grow, for you will find that you cannot have real power and freedom until you are harmless, you cannot have real knowledge until you are utterly true, you cannot have the real joy of life until you are full of sympathy, love and reverence. Certainly there are many tricks and stunts which you might learn by special means, but these do not belong to our true purpose.

Be frank with yourself. Clearly define your purpose and settle upon the best means that lead thereto. Life is serious. You cannot afford to play with your destiny and palter with your principles. If you still seek above all things the satisfaction of worldly ambitions and possessions, acknowledge the fact to yourself and consistently pursue the object to success : but a mind divided against itself will never stand for long. Success in meditation will not come until you disband the conflicting hosts of desires that perpetually carry on

their civil wars within you, and thus come to be at peace with yourself. Then that peace within will put you at peace with all the world.

CHAPTER XIII

CONTEMPLATION

THE TOP OF YOUR THOUGHT

AS concentration leads on to meditation, so does meditation lead on to contemplation, which may be defined as concentration at the top end of one's line of thought. Just as it is not well to begin meditation suddenly, but it is well to sit down and quietly bring the attention to the chosen subject, first of all thinking of a large scene and then narrowing down gradually to the special object, and then meditating upon it, so it is not well to end a meditation abruptly. At a certain point one must stop the flow of thought and dwell for a short time with clear-sighted and calm vision upon the best thing that one has been able to reach. It may be that you have reached a height or depth of thought beyond which you cannot go to any advantage. At this point your attention begins to waver, your mind begins to lose its hold. Do not then try to go further; do not desperately try to clutch or grasp that splendid conception or vision that is flickering just beyond your reach. Stop where you are and gaze contentedly at the highest you have been able to attain. That is contemplation.

INSPIRATION

It will often happen that this highest conception has not been the consecutive outcome of your meditative process, but while you were going on with that a thought that can irradiate the whole mind, or a great emotion that can give you a peace that does pass understanding, or a great vision of beauty or love or whatever it may be, such as you have not had before, bursts in upon you in a flash of inspiration. Then you may stop the meditation and give your whole attention to the contemplation of that greatest thing. Such contemplation creates new platforms on which consciousness can stand, so that when you come round again to deal with that deepest thought you will find that it is easier to hold, and that your meditation can be carried further still.

It often happens in daily life that those who are given to meditation catch sudden glimpses of great truths, which carry with them some inexplicable evidence of their own accuracy, and one thinks them wonderfully simple, and says to oneself: "Now why on earth did I never think of that or hear about it before?" But beware; if you do not keep your attention on that idea, simple as it is, it will be gone from you very soon and you will be unable to recover its message. It is, alas, true that you must imprison it in a form of words. Write it down and make it the subject of future meditation, not forgetting that the words are not the truth. In such a case the words may help you to recover the reality that you have

seen, which is difficult to find in the great thoughts of others, buried as they are in books or speech, in words that can never say anything, but can only suggest. A great truth put into words is like a bird kept in a cage; some like its song, but it has not quite the note of liberty, the quality of life.

INTELLECTUAL CONTEMPLATION

There are certain definite ways in which we can practise contemplation. In all cases one should go through the three stages in order to reach the top of one's thought: (1) the attention must be centred on the object; (2) thought must be active with reference to that object alone; (3) the mind must remain actively centred on the object while its own lower activities are successfully suppressed. In the last stage we stop all comparing and reasoning and remain with the attention fixed actively upon the object, trying to penetrate the indefiniteness which for us then appears to surround it.

It will be seen that throughout the three stages great concentration is required, so that the activity of thought may be maintained within a circle so small that the centre of it is always within the sphere of attention. The process of contemplation will really commence when the conscious activity begins to run, as it were, at right angles to the usual thought-activity which endeavors to understand a thing in reference to other things of its own nature and plane; such movement cutting across the planes of its existence

and penetrating into its subtle and inner nature. When the attention is no longer divided into parts by the activities of comparing, the mind will be moving as a whole, and will seem quite still, just as a spinning top may appear to stand still when it is in most rapid motion.

Suppose, for example, you take an idea such as that of justice; you might first consider some form of justice, the manifestation of justice in an act, in such a manner that the whole of your mind is occupied with that; then you might turn to the thought of the psychological effects of justice on the doer and the receiver, and allow this to occupy the entire mind; and then pass from that to an endeavor to comprehend abstract justice, and thus continue the mental effort until you can carry your thought no further, but find it in, as it were, an open space, and unable to grasp anything clearly. When you then, by an effort of will, hold your thought at a level beyond that at which its normal activities go on, it is obvious that then you can no longer be thinking about the object, but only contemplating it.

If you are able to do so, it will be better to avoid starting this process with the thought of yourself and the object as two different things in relation to each other, for then you will not easily escape this idea of its relation to yourself, and thus will not be able to obtain the idea untinged with feeling. But if you can reach such a point of self-detachment as to start your contemplation from the inside of the thing itself, and still keep up your mental enthusiasm and

energy all along the line of thought, from the name to the form of the object, from that to its psychological aspect (to its feeling or thought, if it is a sentient object, or to the feeling and thought which it awakens in a sentient mind, if it is a mere object or a quality), from that to its abstract nature (to its nature in simultaneous relation to all conceivable manifestations of itself) in which both word and form have disappeared—and you are able to hold the mind there, trying to pierce the indefiniteness that surrounds this state (and yet using no words or forms for that purpose), just as you might try to penetrate a mist with physical vision, then, holding yourself there, looking forward and never thinking of turning back, poised, as it were, like a bird on the wing, you will accomplish contemplation.

Let us take some definite examples in order to make the method more comprehensible. If I fix my attention on this sheet of paper, I may consider what sort, size, shape, color, texture, thickness, variety, of paper it is, what relation it bears to other sheets of paper in the book, where and how it was made, and many other things in connection with it. Suppose, however, I wish to contemplate it, then I will start with my attention on the paper and, after observing it, carefully proceed to think of its more subtle nature, of its composition, of the subtle elements that make it up, and what it would be like to a vision which had to do with such subtle realities. Going beyond that, I might try to conceive what is the nature of those invisible particles composing it, and make an effort to apply to them a kind of mental

perception, not mere words and definitions. Such a course would end in the process of contemplation.

If, however, an object possessing consciousness is selected, more stages will be available. Suppose, for example, we take a dog. I concentrate my attention on the dog, not thinking of that dog in relation to myself as regards action or emotion or position or relativity of any kind. I pass from that to an effort to understand the inner nature of the object, the feelings and thoughts that may occupy it, and endeavor to realise its state of consciousness. It is difficult to go further with an animal.

If one ventures to fix one's attention upon a superior being, one would pass from the physical appearance to meditate upon the state of feeling and emotion and thought, and so try to rise inwards to grasp the state of consciousness which he enjoys. In any of these cases, when I have carried my thought inwards until it can go no further and I cannot grasp clearly what is before it, though I know that there is something there, and hold to that position without going back or turning aside, I am in a state of contemplation with reference to the inner nature of that object. This is a process which must generally be practised many times, whenever opportunity offers, before any success will come.

It will be seen that in this contemplation there is nothing in the nature of sleep or mental inactivity, but an intense search ; you make an effort to see in the indefiniteness something definite, and refuse for the time being to descend to the ordinary lower regions of

conscious activity in which your sight is normally clear and precise.

DEVOTIONAL CONTEMPLATION

One who has an intense affection for an object of worship, as a Christian devotee would have for the Christ, or a Hindu for Shri Krishna, can follow the same method, but in his case the activity will be mainly one of feeling. The devotee would first picture in imagination the particular form which he regards as a special manifestation of God. He would dwell upon that, allowing his feelings to flow out towards it in affection, admiration and reverence. He would picture himself as in the company of that divine Being, associated with Him in the incidents of His life. Then, when his feelings were at their height, he would make an effort to pass from the outer form to realise the feelings and thoughts which animate that divine form in such adorable ways, and would think how these gave rise to the wholly delightful exterior ; and thus his own feelings would be transformed. He would begin to realise, with ardent devotion, the finer characteristics of the divine nature.

At first he would regard God, manifested in a particular form, as the proprietor of all things, and would perform all the acts of his life in order to please Him. Now he begins to see that the finer qualities, so transcendently manifest in that divine form, appear in some measure in all other forms also, and he begins to realise that there is something of the divine nature

in all things—that God pervades where He possesses. Thus carrying his passionate attachment into a subtler condition, the worshipper begins to perceive God in all forms and to feel for them an ardent affection, inasmuch as they manifest Him. Yet he need not lose his adoration for the best beloved form, just as a mother, while loving brothers and sisters and other relations and friends, is still most fond of her babe.

A further step is taken when the devotee passes on to the principle of utter and unconditional loving and giving which the form embodies, and now instead of thinking that there is something of God in all forms he will realise that all exist in God, that each represents and reproduces Him, though not in His fulness, yet just so much of it as there is, is God, and if anything seems to be evil or ugly, that is because he feels there a little absence of that which he knows to be divine. Yet all that there is manifests God, and through each thing he recognises Him. As the devotee, though daring to look only at the feet of the embodied savior, would yet love the whole of Him, so also, while he sees here but imperfect manifestations of God, he knows himself through those to be ever in the presence of the Divine.

And if by the processes of contemplation he can carry on into those higher regions the ardor of his personal passion for the divine form, he will thus abide constantly in the ecstasy of His presence, feeling all things to be forms of Him, and all acts to be His performance. In the course of this practice also there

will be times when the devotee will lose grasp, as he goes onward, of the things which he can clearly realise. He will find himself in a region of emotional indefiniteness, and be tempted to sink back to dwell upon the more familiar forms; but he should hold on and maintain the ardor of his feelings while trying to penetrate what may sometimes seem the empty air of loftier conceptions of the Divine.

CONTEMPLATION AND WORSHIP

Contemplation is always to be seen to some extent in true worship. Worship is a faculty different from thought, different even from love; it is the little self finding itself in the greater self, as though the sun reflected in a pool of water should look up at the sun in heaven and feel a sudden liberation into that greater life. It has not lost itself; it has gained itself. This is the experience of man suddenly confronted with a realisation of that which is utterly greater than he had thought. Then he forgets that which he used to call himself; the little mind has become one with the universal mind.

It is the opening up of a new faculty. With the physical body we contact the material things of the world; with our lower emotions we rejoice in their energy; with our mentality we come into touch with the material laws that govern all those things; with our higher emotions, our intuitional feelings, we become sensitive to the life in our neighbor, we become devoted to his welfare and happiness; but with this

faculty of worship we come into contact with the One Self.

Emerson spoke of this faculty as the flowering and completion of human culture. On the tree of life it is not always the biggest branch that is the highest. At the animal stage of evolution we see that the physical and emotional powers have been to some extent developed, and there is also a little growth of mind. At the ordinary human level that growth of mind has become dominant, and the man uses his judgment to select his desires, to decide which feelings he will keep in his mind and which he will set aside, but in him there is yet only a tiny appearance of the higher human emotion, the ethical instinct that can make him consider others as himself or even before himself. In the man of saintly type that ethical instinct has grown till it overshadows the mentality and in him the mind is occupied only in planning for the service of that great human heart. But even he has still to develop to its full proportions another faculty—this realisation of the divine Self, the faculty of worship. It is something like the growth of those trees, such as the palm, which put out their new branches at the top; first you see but a tiny sprout, almost hidden among the sturdy fronds of earlier growth, but presently that little leaf has grown till it overshadows the rest of the tree. So in every man will this faculty, so small at present, gradually grow by use to be the greatest thing, and bring him to the perfection of human life.

The swiftness of its working is a perpetual miracle. The devotee of beauty stands in rapt adoration before

a glorious sunset, before the mountains in their strength, bearing on their heads their snowy symbols of purity, before a great canyon, a mighty waterfall, a raging typhoon—when he returns to the old small self he brings with him some of the beauty, the peace, the strength, which he contemplated. To see God is to become Him. No one else hath seen Him at any time.

CONTEMPLATION OF THE SELF

Another form of contemplation, in great favor in the school of the unequalled Shri Shankarāchārya, is the contemplation of one's own true nature. Look at the body and consider its various parts. Gaze at the hand; look at it intently as mere dissociated form, until you realise that "such a queer thing cannot be I". Apply the same thought to any part of the body. Look in a mirror at your own eyes and realise that they, also, cannot be yourself. Subject and object can never be the same, and I am the subject, the perceiver, not the form, the perceived.

What then are you? The invisible mind which uses this aggregate called the body? Inspect the mind as you have examined the body. You have discovered that you are not fingers and thumbs and eyes. Are you anger, fear, trust, doubt, kindness, reverence, pride, or any other of the various modes of action of the mind? Are you to be found in its modes of receiving knowledge? Are you reason, or perception, or the faculty of discrimination? Surely not. These are the elements which aggregate to compose the mind, and

thus this mind cannot be myself. The mind is only an aggregate, a collection of objective things, an external thing, and not myself. I look down upon it and know that it is not myself.

Whence, then, does the conception of individuality arise? Am I this personality, this John Smith or Lord Whiptop? Certainly not; this is a mere collection of associations which I am temporarily using, having gathered them round myself and shut myself in with them by a long series of imperfect imaginings. No other person can speak of me, can praise or blame me; they know only this outer thing. If I in the past have fallen in love with this body and mind, become infatuated with it, as Narcissus with his reflection in the pool, still there is no need that I should continue the error. What then is the I, when you have thus struck away these temporary external coverings? That question can be answered only by each one for himself when he realises his own inner nature, having cast away layer after layer of the outer crust, having broken away the shell to find the kernel within.

It would be a mistake to suppose that, as that process of inner search for yourself goes on, your own nature is discovered to be more indefinite. Such an idea arises from the erroneous supposition that only the outer body is warm and full of the wine of life, while the inner is chill and empty. Some philosophers have ventured to say that they cannot detect themselves apart from some bodily feeling, but that is only another way of saying that one cannot remain awake in the body without some sensibility of the

body, that one cannot think of the body without feeling it in some way, which is no doubt true. But it is possible to lose sight for a time of the existence of the body and find oneself something beyond it and independent of it.

What are the results of denying, in this contemplation, our identity with the outer bodies and the mind? What is the effect of this realisation that the mind with all its contents is a thing that we use, and not ourselves? Does it mean that the inner man is left more and more attributeless—changeless, powerless, loveless, ignorant? It does not. In the process you are not divesting yourself of attributes but of limitations. The mind is swifter and freer than the body, and beyond the mind is the spirit, which is freer and swifter still. Love is more possible in the quietude of the heart than in any outer expression, but in the spirit beyond the mind it is divinely certain. Reason and judgment ever correct the halting evidence of the senses; the vision of the spirit discerns the truth without organs and without mind.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

IF you have said: "I will," then choose what you will have, and the nearer your choice is to the heart of the Great Law the sooner you will succeed. Give rein to your fancy and picture to yourself the liberty, and the might, and the love, and the knowledge that will be yours. Your chariot shall be the lightning flash, and your raiment the splendor of the sun, and your voice shall be the thunder of the spheres. The divinest knowledge shall be your food, and the ethereal blue your home. Yours shall be the strength of mountains, the power of the tempest, the force of the ocean, the beauty of the sunrise, the triumph of the noonday sun, the liberty of the wind, the gentleness of the flowers, the peace of the evening twilight, the purity of eternal snow.

Do you say that this is extravagant? It is not so. It is true that you cannot achieve this success in one brief life of fifty years. Reason tells you that the accomplishment of a lifetime must be far short of this. First of all believe in your own immortality, then realise that the future is full of splendor without limit, of achievement beyond, and beyond, and beyond

again, the most avaricious dreams of imagination, and that that achievement is a matter for your choosing now. Death is but a trifling episode in our agelong life. Through its portal we go as one rises from a bed of sickness to go out into the sunshine. If we set our hearts upon the superhuman things, then we shall achieve. If we fix our ambitions in human life, these, also, we shall attain in constant rebirth. Believe in your own immortality; give wings to your imagination; say: "This is within my reach, I WILL ACHIEVE"—and success will come sooner than you expect. It may be a few thousand years, but do you dread that? If so, you have not willed but only wished, for if you had willed you would know that the result is certain, and what is sure is as good as though it were already here. Fix your thought upon your ideal; it will come, and its time is as good as now, and, in the light of that certainty, what may happen to us between now and then can matter not at all, and of no moment can be the road we take to that stupendous goal.

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